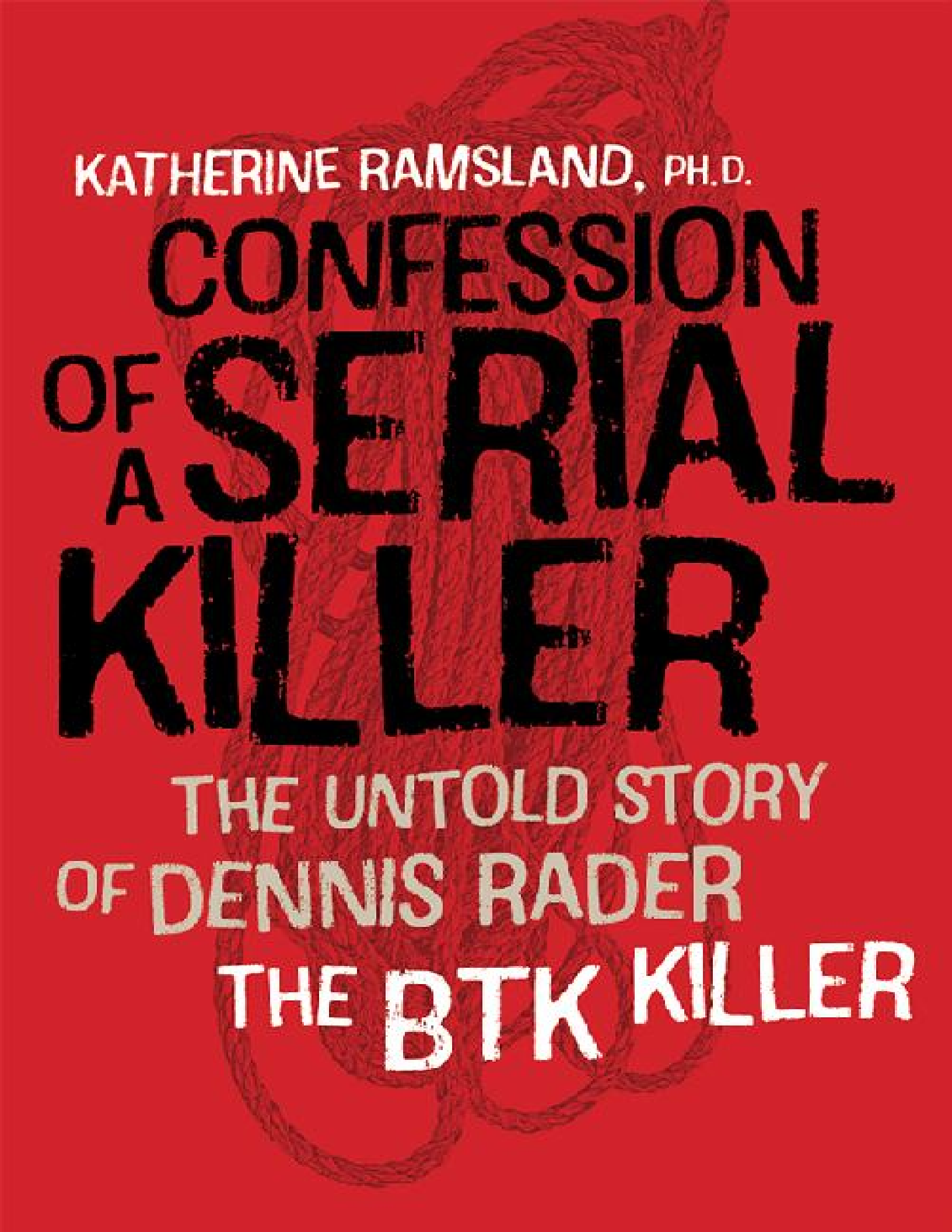
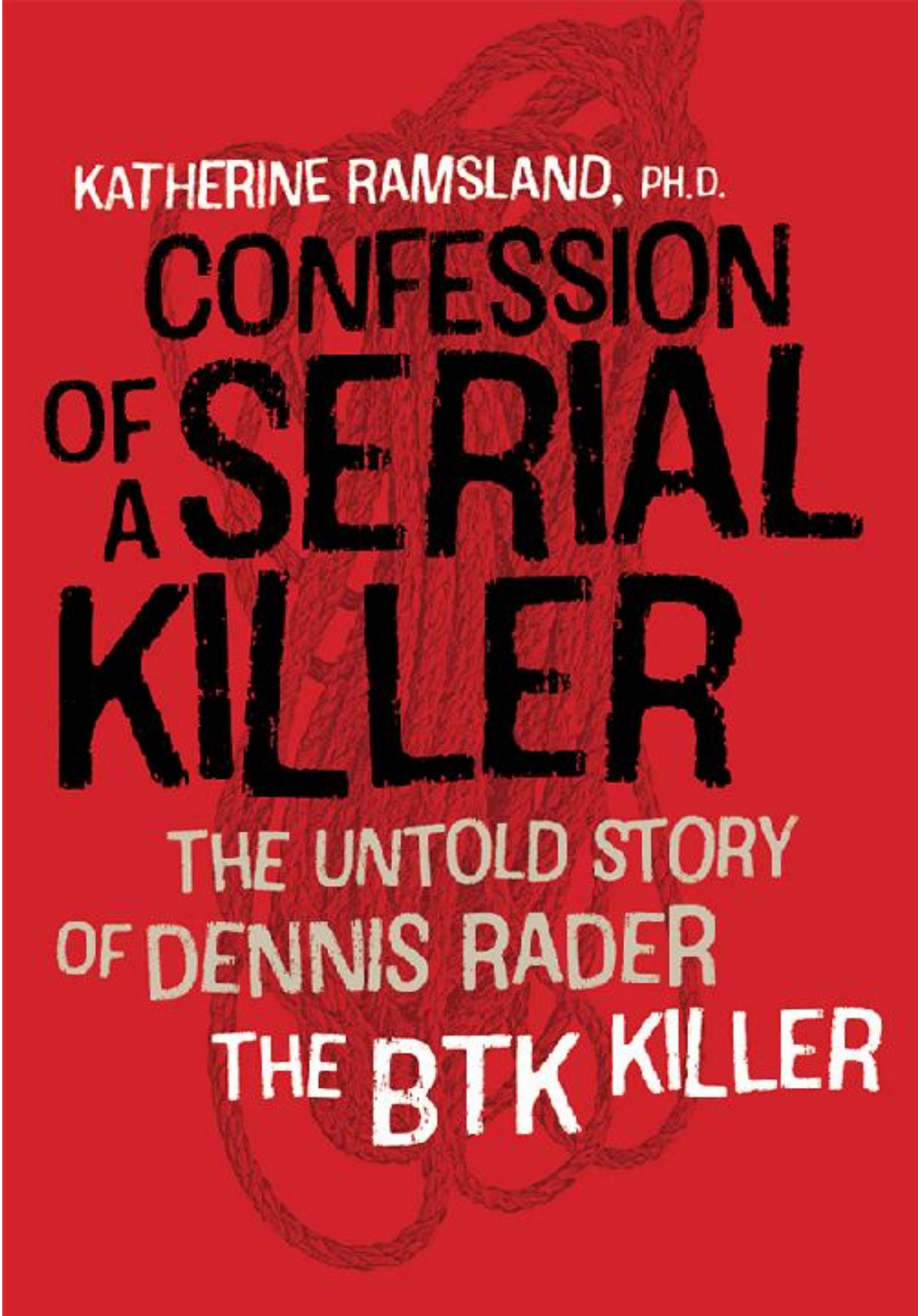




KATHERINE RAMSLAND, PH.D.

**CONFESSION
OF
A SERIAL
KILLER**

THE UNTOLD STORY
OF DENNIS RADER
THE BTK KILLER



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ForeEdge

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Ramsland, Katherine M., 1953–

Title: Confession of a serial killer: the untold story of Dennis Rader, the BTK killer / Katherine Ramsland.

Description: Hanover: ForeEdge, 2016. | Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2016009536 (print) | LCCN 2016015057 (ebook) | ISBN 9781611688412 (cloth) | ISBN 9781611689730 (epub, mobi & pdf)

Subjects: LCSH: Rader, Dennis, 1945– | Serial murderers—Kansas—Wichita—Biography. | Serial murderers—Kansas—Wichita—Case studies.

Classification: LCC HV6248.R24 R35 2016 (print) | LCC HV6248.R24 (ebook) | DDC 364.152/32092 [B]—dc23

LC record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2016009536>

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Completing this book has been a long process and there are many to thank.

John Silbersack, my agent and friend, had vision. Despite the many twists and turns of getting this book to a publisher, he showed incredible persistence and stamina.

None of this would have happened without Kris Casarona and Jim Thompson. Kris first contacted Dennis Rader in 2005 and collected an enormous amount of material from him about his life before I came along. In the hope of benefiting the victims' families, she willingly shared it and stood by as an advisor. Attorney Jim Thompson kept the files safe and provided a place for me to go through them. He also accompanied me on some trips in Wichita and assisted with the process at El Dorado Correctional Facility.

Members of the Victims' Family Trust approved me for this work, although I know that they would prefer that Dennis Rader had never existed.

Former Sedgwick County district attorney Nola Tedesco Foulston provided a large cache of material from the investigation, along with photos from her files and encouragement to ensure a benefit to professionals. She kept the late Lieutenant Ken Landwehr's legacy alive with constant reminders of his work on the BTK investigation.

OGS Sally Keglovits and Dana DeVito were my main emotional support during those days when this work felt very dark. Sally injected optimism all the way through, and as the go-to "researchist" on the Clutter family murders, discussed this angle with me.

My assistant, Alina Edinger, slogged through proofreading and helped me to get items from Rader's letters on paper when my work duties deflected my focus.

Al Carlisle generously allowed me to publish a chunk of his work on compartmentalization.

Gregg McCrary, a long-time friend, had the FBI profiling background to discuss many of the criminological aspects with me.

Dr. Mimi Meyerhofer, a neuropsychiatrist, agreed to look at Rader's letters and discuss the neurological implications of a processing disorder. So did neuropsychologist Debra Niehoff.

Kent Kiehl gave a tour of the Mind Research Network's lab, where they analyze MRIs of psychopathic brains. He also discussed the evaluation of psychopaths with me and provided the self-report test.

Serial killer expert Peter Vronsky, who shared with me the notoriety of having our books in Rader's stash, offered some commentary.

Richard Pult, my editor at UPNE, shepherded the process, and I deeply appreciate his interest in this subject.

I must also thank Marilyn Bardsley, because she launched me into this field of writing with the opportunity to work for her on Court TV's Crime Library.

I thank in advance those professionals who will be working with me on the data, to see what more we can do.

INTRODUCTION

At the post office, I glanced at the wall of stamps for sale. At times during Dennis Rader's cat-and-mouse correspondence with the police in 2004, he would use a stamp that suggested a dark theme. He had picked one that commemorated trains, he told me, because he'd fantasized about trains hitting girls bound on the tracks. This information infected how I looked at the post office wall. A stamp about the plight of missing children, for example, now seemed a tool for a serial killer's game.

In the cereal aisle, Rader did not consider nutrition or taste, but whether the cereal's name would convey his private code. A child's fashion doll became a sex object, as did catalog models and a child star on an after-school TV series. Rader scoped out a Sunday school classroom for its potential for postmortem bondage photography and viewed a neighbor's neck as a great place for a rope. His point of view as a serial killer laid a sinister gleam on many otherwise ordinary items.

He *sees* the world differently. That's what I had to understand as I approached this book. But seeing the world in dark tones does not cause someone to become violent. It's not that simple. This narrative, told mostly by Rader himself, explores the incremental transition from an average American kid into what many view as a monster. He called the thing that propelled him toward darkness "Factor X." It's easy to switch contexts and view things differently—to "cube," as Rader calls it. The difficult thing to comprehend is how that switch can turn a seemingly benign individual into a killer. Ultimately, Rader believes, it's a mystery.

This book is a guided autobiography. Rader wrote numerous letters to tell his tale, and we talked a lot on the phone. (Speaking through prison monitors, I found, was unproductive.) This is *his* story, the way he tells it, and I intrude only to assist with chronology or provide substance, sense, or background. Thus, this tale is also annotated in places with items from research or essential associations. For example, if Rader mentions Ted Bundy, or we talk about a movie or book, I provide the context.

Occasionally, I insert items that assist with what is known about violence or serial murder, especially in the epilogue.

I keep Rader's writing as true as possible to how he expressed himself, including some grammatical errors, unless they interfere too much with comprehension. We discussed the importance of having his voice be what it is rather than what I might make it. His style of telling the tale is just as important as what he says. Within these layers, criminologists may see a lot.

Although this book follows the facts, it is *not* a true crime narrative. For readers who seek more details about the investigation and the law enforcement personnel involved, I list books in the bibliography. I recommend *Bind, Torture, Kill*, by the *Wichita Eagle* staff members, as they were at the center. (I relied mostly on police and court records, as well as Rader's personal documents.) This book also does not represent the perspectives of the victims' families. I did not wish to place their stories with Rader's.

In keeping with Rader's magical number, three, this book has three braided threads: Rader's story, in his words; context for those stories when he fails to supply it; and my narrative structure. This introduction, however, is from *my* perspective, as is the closing chapter. Bear with me as I describe how this book began. You will find Rader's voice here as well. Let the demystifying begin.

CODE BREAKING

My introduction to Rader was through correspondence. At that point, I knew from news accounts and true crime books that he'd been a churchgoing family man who'd developed a double life as a serial killer. Among his victims was a family of four. Although the official victim toll was ten, if he had killed everyone he'd targeted, there would have been four or five times that number. He managed to keep his secrets—from his wife, two kids, siblings, parents, neighbors, friends, and coworkers—for three decades.

Rader allowed me into his "cave" through an intermediary whom he trusted (her code name was Dawnett). We discussed many topics, from prison routines to travel to his Spanish lessons. I noticed that he kept track of even the smallest details, as he offered items from his daily logs: what he

ate (“peas and rice today”), how many hours he slept, which stars he could see from his small window on a given night, and what time each day the guards arrived with his meals and meds. He counted the number of pages of each letter. It all goes into his log. He illustrates with detailed, hand-drawn maps and diagrams. He talks in detail and recalls things along several tracks at once. Sometimes he goes off track and stays off. It can be frustrating, but this trait is among the collection of items that reveal his process. An important question to ask about someone in whose background we find few of the typical predictors of violence is, what *else* will we find?

After a series of letters about hummingbirds and moon cycles, I asked Rader to tell me about one of his torture fantasies (which we would later refer to in letters as “cave flowers” or “mushrooms”). I had seen drawings from his secret folder that featured women and children being bound and tortured with various devices, as well as photos of several actual victims, bound and posed. Rader had placed strings of numbers and letters on them, and each image had a name, like “Monique.” I wanted to know what this meant.

He said this would take time. So, I waited.

I’m intrigued with the ideas that people have formed about Dennis Rader. As they learn about this project, they make comments. Many are based on serial-killer stereotypes from television. Does he speak in a monotone? After all, psychopaths lack emotions, don’t they? Someone else insists that he *must* have been abused as a child; if he doesn’t admit it, he’s lying. Another is convinced that the so-called Macdonald triad of fire-setting, bed-wetting, and animal cruelty is a firm precursor to serial murder.

In other words, many people believe they already know what they will read in this book. They’ll be looking for confirmation. But Dennis Rader has unique qualities and experiences. He looks to role models among other serial killers, but he also diverges from them.

One of the most complicated aspects of this project has been figuring out Rader’s codes. Eventually, I graduated to co-authoring a code with him and finally to devising one we would ultimately use. I will convey this information shortly so that readers can experience what I did.

When I asked Rader to provide details about his torture fantasy, he said he would need to convey it in a secretive way. I felt some excitement. The symbolic alphabet to which I would be privy had the aura of Rader’s

personal mark, as if grown from dark soil that had absorbed the full impact of his primal appetite for bondage and power.

Rader was hesitant about “going into the cookie jar” for several reasons. First, reliving his fantasies invited him toward his “bad” side, what he calls Factor X, the Black Hat, or the monster. From the start, I sensed that he wanted me to view him as a better man now. “I’m a good person,” he often said, “who did some bad things.”

Second, he was rightfully concerned about prison personnel (“Walpole has eyes”) who might grab whatever he wrote or drew to sell or post online. So, Rader’s code served a purpose both practical and personal.

He promised to work on a drawing and a coded explanation. He would send part to Dawnett and part to me. Then she and I would have to piece it together.

I had a task as well. I had to do some research. Before I took on this project, I had already explored how other mental health experts had approached extreme offenders. For *The Mind of a Murderer*, I had looked back over a century of such efforts and found a dozen in which a credentialed professional had gone beyond what was typically done to process the detailed data of an offender’s life history. I believe this work is important for exploring the core structure of the phenomenon and also for pondering outliers. Rader embodies both.

CRIMINAL MINDS

A nineteenth-century forensic pathologist who showed interest in the criminal mind had inspired me to look into cases in which criminologists, psychiatrists, or psychologists had developed close relationships with extreme offenders. The pathologist, Alexandre Lacassagne, had instituted the earliest “criminal autobiographies,” believing that within the raw material of killers’ lives and experiences were the answers to their development into such serious—and sometimes twisted—offenders.

During the first half of the twentieth century, there were only a few such analyses. In 1930, Dr. Karl Berg interviewed serial killer Peter Kürten, who had assaulted and murdered a number of people, including children, in Düsseldorf, Germany. Under arrest, Kürten admitted to drinking the blood from his victims because it excited him. When Berg approached him,

Kürten confessed in shocking detail. For those aspects of the crime in which Kürten took great pleasure, his memory was quite accurate. He reeled off crimes he'd perpetrated for which he had not yet been accused, culminating in a total of seventy-nine different criminal incidents (including thirteen murders). Going beyond a mere case analysis, Berg offered a means for other professionals to consider the psychological details of the developing sadist.

Collectively, mental health experts who have used their training and skills to probe the minds of the most extreme murderers have retrieved important information about motives, pre- and post-crime behavior, fatal fantasies, mental rehearsal, compartmentalized personalities, and the role of mental disorders. Much has been learned about how and why some people commit shocking acts of violence. Yet there still exist mysteries, especially about psychosexual disorders.

Another closely studied serial killer was one of Rader's inspirations: Ted Bundy. He murdered at least thirty women in half a dozen states from the Pacific Northwest to Florida during the 1970s. Bundy talked freely about his compulsions, referring to himself in the third person: "The initial sexual encounter," he said, "would be more or less a voluntary one that did not wholly gratify the full spectrum of desires that he had intended. And so, his sexual desire builds back up and joins . . . this other need to totally possess her."

Another special favorite of Rader's was H. H. Holmes (real name, Herman Mudgett). Holmes provided several confessions, one of which claimed more than one hundred victims.

"I recall reading 'Bluebeard' at an early age," Rader said. "I knew about the White City in Illinois. I recall drawing some of it back in fifth grade, while the rest of the kids played outside. I and another boy would draw on the chalkboard castles of doom. We both loved monster movies and scary stuff."

This is important for understanding the torture fantasy that Rader sent to me: his reference to the "White City" is the 1893 World's Exposition in Chicago. He recalled stories told by relatives who had lived in Chicago about a fiendish man who had built a hotel for travelers. After Holmes was arrested for insurance fraud, the hotel was searched, producing proof that he had used it over and over as a death trap. There were countless victims. Rader liked the idea of trapping females the way Holmes had done.

At some point during his adolescence, thanks to a detective magazine he found in a barbershop, Rader added a more sophisticated layer to his fantasies. *The Crime Casebook Magazine* had featured a cover story, “The Castle of Horrors,” calling Holmes a “one-man crime cult” and a “modern-day Bluebeard.” The cover illustration was of a frightened young woman in a nightgown, watching a man approach her bed.

Rader was fascinated with how Holmes devised a sophisticated ruse as an educated gentleman while simultaneously luring women into his fatal traps. Then he would strip the flesh off their corpses and sell their skeletons to corpse dealers for medical schools. He had done all of this in the midst of a bustling city, with no one noticing. Indeed, he’d built his hotel *as* a death trap without anyone suspecting what he was up to.

The hotel’s second floor, Rader learned, had featured soundproof sleeping chambers with peepholes, asbestos-padded walls that slid open, and gas pipes that Holmes controlled from another room. Many of the murder rooms had low ceilings and trapdoors. Behind the walls were greased chutes to a cellar, in which Holmes had installed a large furnace. Investigators surmised that Holmes placed young women into the special chambers, into which he then pumped lethal gas, and watched them struggle and die. When finished, he might have slid the corpses down the secret chutes into his cellar, where vats of acid awaited them.

Rader was fascinated with Holmes’ cunning and craftsmanship. This was the kind of person he aspired to become. On the surface, everyone would consider him a good person, as they did with Holmes; underneath, he’d carry out the violence that gave him a shivering thrill. He could trap women and then go home to a family who loved him. He could have it all. In fact, he could be better at this than Holmes: By studying Holmes’ mistakes, he could avoid capture. “I thought I could control it,” he told me.

Rader put a lot of energy into envisioning a place like Holmes’ three-story “castle” for his own twisted activities, where shocking things he performed on bound females would go undetected. His chosen locale was the large red barn of an abandoned farmstead he often passed, on a country road along a river just outside Wichita, Kansas, where he lived. “If you drive through Kansas in a particular area, along the Cottonwood River,” he told me, “some barns are close to the north hill, thus a good place for cellar, caves/Hidey Holes. They’re all set off the road and back away from those nosey neighbors and passerbys.”

If it could be made large enough, he thought, a barn could house a small train track. On it he could tie his victims and run them over as they screamed for help. No one would hear. After a murder he could walk out into the world as Holmes had done and pretend to be just like everyone else. The notion of this double life thrilled him.

He had referred to this imaginary barn as “The BTK lair.” It had “different levels,” he said, “and a silo.” He had most loved the silo. He’d considered installing a vault like the one H. H. Holmes had used to suffocate some of his “guests.” Rader would also include a large acid vat for disposal and a peephole for watching his victims suffer.

After waiting two weeks for Rader’s description of his torture fantasy, I received a thick packet. I opened it and pulled out the contents.

ENIGMA

There were pages torn from a newspaper, a few clippings of color photos from magazines, and a partial list of letters—A, B, C, D, and so on—with corresponding phrases. I spread the contents out on a table.

I had expected to be able to figure out Rader’s code quickly, but I was wrong. His mind was convoluted. How to link the items he had sent with this secret code was confusing. I wrote my own list of the letters of the alphabet so I could keep notes on the side, without marking his.

Rader had written a fourteen-page letter, some of which was innocuous stuff, like his favorite prison meal or the Kansas weather report. I did pay attention to the latter, aware that whenever he mentioned the agriculture reports, he was secretly referring to the area farms, and thus his fantasy torture barn. I looked for hints and finally found a few vague references about how I should read the code. But even his references were cryptic! After reading the entire letter, I was no closer to a solution.

Rader had given part of the code to Dawnett, but it would be hours before I could talk to her, so I tried to figure out at least some of what he had sent. This was a key to his torture design. It had long been his mental companion, even as he’d moved through life passing as a family man and community leader. It might still be.

I looked over his assortment of items. The newspaper pages were loaded with book ads. On them, Rader had written numbers and letters in

various spots. There were also two pages of recipes, and covers from two different magazines that featured large red barns. One barn photo showed a hefty silo; on the other photo, Rader had circled a dog. But there were no additional clues. I knew I'd have to push my way through his cramped handwriting to see how this all fit together.

Offenders can filter how they feel about what they're doing, but their behavioral patterns often reveal more than what they say. Rader's use of codes and deflection, while reasonable if he suspected guards of reading his mail, could also signal a desire to play clever games.

I made a list of letters of the alphabet to match with those letters that Rader had placed on the pictures or planted (with their meaning) on the back pages of his letter. I left blanks for letters I couldn't find, hoping that Dawnett would fill in the blanks. It was tough, but I finally achieved the following initial map of what Rader sent:

A—placed on a newsprint picture of a book, *Best Food Writing*, with the words “book title” written next to it

B—placed on a newsprint picture of a crime novel, *Virals*, by Kathy Reichs, with “book only” written next to it

C—placed on a newsprint picture of a novel, *Towers of Midnight*, with “book only” and an arrow pointing to this publisher's summary: “The battle scenes have the breathless urgency of first-hand experience, and the evil laced into the forces of good, the dangers latent in any promise of salvation, the sense of the unavoidable onslaught of unpredictable events . . .”

D—placed on a crime novel, *Deeper than Dead*, with “book only” in Rader's hand next to it. The promotional description reads: “Four children and a teacher make a gruesome discovery: a partially buried female body, her eyes and mouth glued shut. A serial killer is at large . . .”

E—placed next to a romance novel, *A Duke's Temptation*, with “book only” and “reference to castle” next to it

F—

G—placed on the picture of a novel, *The Swan Thieves*, with the title circled

H—

I—

J—the circled picture of a herding dog next to the red barn photo

K—

L—

M—

N—

O—an author's last name, “Hunter,” is circled

P—a book blurb is circled: “Captivating, overpowering obsession, engrossing”

Q—again, the novel, *Virals*, with “title” written next to it

R—the picture of an author circled

S—placed next to the picture of a romance novel, *Towers of Midnight*

T—the phrase on a newsprint page, “Wheel of Time,” is circled

U—placed next to a crime novel, *Deeper than Dead*, with “title” written next to it

V—placed next to a circle around a picture of a woman's head

W—placed next to a circled phrase, “Captivate the women”

I placed the list next to me and began to make my way systematically through his letter. This, too, was no easy task.

From his very first communication, Rader wrote in segments, delineated by dates and themes, but they all ran together without typical paragraph breaks. Sometimes he started a new subject mid-sentence. I had to pay close attention. I figured that this segmentation was due at times to the routine interruptions of his prison schedule, but I observed that his mind could shift with ease from intensely demanding subjects to superficial observations about what he was eating. (He did once mention, as we discussed a TV series we were both watching, that he could break away easily from intense subjects and go right to sleep.) He *could* focus, but he could also speak in what amounted to “word salad”—lots of unrelated phrases thrown together in a disjointed way. It was too soon to decide if this indicated a developmental disability, but the possibility was in the back of my mind.

Several pages in to this fourteen-page letter, after Rader had discussed the usual subjects like the stock market’s behavior (he made imaginary investments), I realized that he had mentioned the “Minotaur sense”—his signal that this was BTK territory. The Minotaur was a mythical beast, kept inside a maze, which fed off of sacrificed youths. Rader had read about the creature in a spy novel and thought it was an appropriate symbol, as well as a good code word. He referred to all serial killers as Minotaurs. By this, he meant that they have an inner beast that devours innocent people.

At this point, the tone changed. Although Rader had added a couple of sidebars (literally writing up the side of the page) about how this was all intended for “beneficial” purposes, the energy palpably crystallized as he described his lair. He was enjoying this. Like Ted Bundy had done during certain probing interviews, Rader sometimes spoke of himself in the third person or used some other distancing mechanism, but it was clear to me that he was describing images and experiences from his most erotic moments.

“Where to start on the main subject,” he wrote. “I try to keep focus, mentally, and not really sure what Dawnett saying last X we spoke. She did mention you collected layer type recipes and tangy subjects of taste. Believe the layers of three (most interested in your collection). So, I found this recipe of tangy Barbecue wings that fit the bill; Boy a King of a meal.

The shredded beef au jus, the filling very tangy. And talking about tangy, I found (A) (B) (C) (D) & E best and others that seem or appear tangy or could in a minotaur sense.”

This is the way in which many of his letters are written. Some run for many pages.

I pondered this segment. Here, I believed, was the heart of the puzzle. I had to figure out how these references related to the clippings, each of which corresponded to one of the letters on Rader’s list. He had not been a cannibal, so what could he mean by recipes? I’d have expected this from Arthur Shawcross, the serial killer who claimed to have cannibalized parts of his victims and who, tongue in cheek, wrote a cookbook. But the food reference had to mean something else for Rader.

One of the books he’d circled had been *Best Food Writing*. And what were the “layer type” recipes I supposedly collected? I had never told him or Dawnett that I collected recipes, because I don’t. So it was apparently a metaphor, but for what? Rader wanted to persuade “peeping eyes” to think he was offering me something benign, but I knew this was a disguise. It had me stymied.

“Believe the layers of three . . . so I found this recipe of tangy barbeque wings that fit the bill; Boy a King of a meal.”

Boy, a King of a Meal. “B” and “K” were underlined. Ah. Layers of *three*—BTK. Could it be that simple? I wasn’t sure, and nothing else in his letter enlightened me. I figured that the notation to books “about castles” was simply affirming that he was communicating about *the* castle—Holmes’ castle—and his own imagined torture emporium. If he referred to just the title or circled a word, this could make it easier. On the cover of *The Swan Thieves* was a pair of women’s bare legs, so I guessed that he viewed this as similar to the photos that another serial-killer role model, Harvey Glatman, had snapped of his victims when he told them they were going to die. For Rader himself, there were ropes around those legs.

Frustrated, I called Dawnett to see if she had received her part of the code. She had. So now we could collaborate.

She knew a lot about Rader’s development, thanks to her five-year correspondence (well over two hundred letters). She warned me that sometimes he made little sense and, after we compared notes, it was clear that Rader had confused even himself. (This had also happened during his confession to the police, when he had unsuccessfully tried to show how to

break his “German Fractional” code.) He’d written things on her list that contradicted things on mine. But together we managed to work out a pattern.

Dawnett e-mailed a page to me, a list Rader had sent her of Roman numerals with corresponding capital letters from A to W. On the list, Rader had written “Big cap letters are the key,” and I thought he was referring to the capital letters he had penned on the various items in *my* packet. The letters from N to W remained blank on Dawnett’s list, but I found words corresponding to these letters from the newspaper book ads. I asked her about the “layers of three” and BTK; she confirmed my interpretation and supplied one more key: “tangy” started with “t.” Whatever started with “t” referred to the torture aspects of BTK’s activity. Thus, “b” and “k” must serve the same purpose. So, I was “interested” in “tangy” recipes. Binding—beef recipes—was the “meat and potatoes” of his “projects.” He had underlined the “b” in “boy” and the “k” in “king,” so he meant to make them stand out. *Best Food Writing* referred to his fantasies—the recipes. “Boy, a King of a meal.”

My stomach lurched. His victims. A king of a meal. Rader was using food to refer to his torture fantasies as if they were delicious. He’d already called this “the cookie jar.” In fact, he’d included a photo of a layered fudge cake and commented: “Where would one start to develop the good or dark side? Hey, like that hot fudge cake recipe, by the way, hot fudge Sundies [sic] is a favorite of mine, that recipe sure looks good. By the way, again, we do receive ice cream once or twice a year at meals . . .”

I could barely look at this photo.

“S,” I learned, referred to sex or sexual fantasies. So, the *dark* chocolate was the Minotaur’s arena for sex-related murders. Apparently, Rader’s fantasies were his sweet tooth. We had now established for further correspondence (or until we switched) that references to food were about what he considered to be food for his dark libido.

A statement followed about the “novel” I was writing about “old castles,” a code for our book and the barn. He said he’d done some “research,” meaning he’d thought back to the earliest roots of his twisted mental life. He’d also enclosed pictures of a “hobby farm” that he thought I was “interested in buying,” in other words, writing about. This, of course, was *his* castle. He was now showing me the inside of his head, where his fantasies lived. It was like Hannibal Lecter offering his ideas about how

Buffalo Bill operated, revealing as much about Lecter as about his subject. Or like Bundy had described, to a pair of Seattle detectives, the “Riverman’s” approach to females and the treatment of their bodies. In that description, Bundy had mostly revealed his *own* methods. So Rader had unzipped the barn door, so to speak. Inside were his erotic treasures.

Before I used Dawnett’s items to finish the list, I completed my journey through Rader’s letter. Referring to the list, Rader said that the letters from A to E “could be used for info on that castle of old novel you are working on. You know the silo (H/F) on hobby farms are a lot like castles, although not for grain. But at one time, people could use them for many things. I think boys at least make at a early age dreams of knights of old. (J) Do-Right, neat old castles, saving the girls, or as Minotaur, the opposite.”

Although the paragraph almost seemed to be gibberish, I could see that he was about to tell me what had entertained him as BTK, and that his fantasies had begun when he was a boy. “J” was for the dog, and Rader’s former dog was named Dudley. *Dudley Do-Right*, a cartoon that first aired on TV in 1960, when he was fifteen, had been a favorite. Not because of the silly do-gooder Canadian Mountie. No, Rader had loved the image of redheaded, wide-eyed Nell, tied with white ropes to a train track. In fact, Rader had grown aroused whenever he heard trains go through Wichita, as he envisioned girls tied to the tracks, trapped, ready to be sliced in half.

“Back to castle of old,” he wrote. “Many early farm kids are around silos all the time. Sometimes, a forbidden fruit, due to their size, height, climb inside the dungeon. Much like the cookie jar on the counter (‘Keep your hand out of it’), must try to have one, sneak a cookie here and there. I recall one such silo, in S.E. Kansas (F [one of the barn photos]). ‘Don’t climb to the top,’ the voice said. Yet in time, I did as I grew older and bolder. What a view, both looking down in the dark pit and the surrounding landscape. Would be nice to have a room, a day clubhouse inside this! The kids used to play Cowboys and Indians, the prisoner locked up inside the silo. They played rough at times, (G [bind]) the person up. That happen to me a lot, by some neighborhood bullies in the late 50s, back in (H [Wichita]). Strange feeling to be hogtied and at the bottom of this pit, so helpless. The calls only moved upward, so no one to see your plight. I’m sure the bullies felt powerful, and in control. They could do anything to you, you were helpless. Do you suppose the Dark Knights of Old felt this

way? 'I got you.' I recall a certain (F [barn]) had box cars as part of the barn, they had taken it and built around it, it being the center part, with box car door, hardware, the works, and ladder outside. The inside turn into storage for grains, workroom, tools, implements, ropes, chains, lot of wood, beams, the smell of hay, straw, old feed sacks. I can smell a barn right now, and it was so close to the silo. Vehicles [trains] could be pushed inside the barn (box car), hid from sight. Easy to connect barn and silo."

In the next paragraph, he cut to a new subject, but I knew it was related. He mentioned that there were lots of cats in the old barn to keep rats and mice down. As a boy, he'd caught feral cats near his grandparents' barn and had strangled or hanged them from beams. It had excited him to watch them struggle for air, so the cats in his barn represented the victims he expected to torture there.

He then said that of the two barn photos he'd sent, his preference was for the one with the big silo. "A person really ought to be a 'Handyman,'" Rader wrote, "thus fixing up the barns and silo." In other words, this barn's caretaker should be versed in how to build torture instruments, as H. H. Holmes had been. Holmes often got deeply involved in the details of his devices, going from craftsman to craftsman until he had exactly what he wanted. Holmes had relished the images of what his victims would suffer. "Nothing left to chance," as Rader liked to say.

Referring again to my research on "castles," Rader wrote, "I believe a modern castle (silo) could have a swimming pool in it depths, no life guard, have to be careful. Naturally, a utility room or mud room, clean up, washer-dryer, etc. Tidy is the key. A kitchen, knives, etc must be sharp, may need to cut up. A strong storage area, a good lock, but big enough to move about, you know, that 6 x 12 area the prison use is about right for a walk-in storage or something along those lines. Pretty well self-contain, well, except the beam holes. I'm glad they don't have cameras and the like here, but a modern place could use them. Part of everyday life and a good security system, inside and out. I picture this main area with a small elevator in the center, a spiral staircase around it. Would have a living room, naturally, for the living, a bedroom for those sexy time and sleep X. A den, with dart board, fun area, archery, you name it, for the male games. Lot of wooden beams are important, you hang this and that on them."

His reference to cameras was about Holmes' habit of watching his trapped victims being gassed to death. The sharp knives, the washing

machine—these were all part of the scheme, some tools for torture and murder, others to clean up evidence.

“If into plants, or sand box area, be careful of quicksand or dry sand and heat. Could use sun lamps. A library to hold all those photos one accumulates. Now days, digital format, computer, but no Internet for others to see.” Being a collector, he would want a special room to use for his photos and drawings of victims, past and future.

Written along the edge of Rader’s letter at this point was the following: “If handicap—wheelchair, etc.—track in the castle to move room to room.” He meant, I believe, that he’d have to include a way to easily transport victims disabled by his torture methods.

He seemed quite happy to be writing so freely about his dark appetites. “Books, & collection of dark side recipes, more hot fudge cakes! Probably on hobby room. Every one would have a different idea. My would be a train layout and real tracks, only very short, probably this room off the den. My train, one of the box car. I recall listening to train from afar as a kid, the powerful sound, lonely.”

He mentioned the “railroad theory” and Do-Right. “Could little Nell,” he asked, “be a maiden-in-distress in castle of old? Some of the old train trestles were built of wooden beams. Would have to have a model of them in that room. At the top should be one’s lair, this actually would be a library/bedroom, desk set and shutter to open and close to view the landscape.” Ominously, he added, “Probably big decision made in this room.” Like Holmes in his control center, an office on the castle’s third floor, Rader would go to the barn’s top floor to plot his predatory behavior—and what to do with his prey once he possessed them.

“Well, more of a male touch,” he added. “I’m sure a female would do it differently. One way to look at the silo, could repress that male private part. Lair on top.”

Yes, he was enjoying this. He was imagining this farm as such an intimate aspect of his secret “Minotaur” side that it was his own male appendage. Anything brought inside the barn—himself—belonged exclusively to him. He would call this SBT—Sparky Big Time.

But then came a cautionary note: “I’ll do more research if needed, but with all the other things I do nowadays it only a passing thought, better things to do, better clear my mind, keep clean, but bottom line, want to help

you and others.” Then, instantly, he had reversed again: “Now for that tangy tarte, sure could eat one right now!”

Personally, I had no appetite.

After mentioning the contents of his dinner tray, Rader wrote, “Different X flavors . . . Both can be physical and mental. I believe the mental part played the biggest part in the tangy recipes. . . . The tangy was more a fiction and fantasy. A meal [victim] does not suffer very long. With that in mind, boys love castles, and like I said in earlier letter. Some like to draw and fantasize. Could it be the old wolf man movies [or] *The House of Wax*.” This cryptic message referred to people entrapped and to humans possessed by an inner ravenous beast.

“Next, in the basement again, the pit of a house, beam pipes, then chicken house with a found magazine. Fantasy grew, fueled by other magazines, like the cookie jar, forbidden . . . Devices started to evolve, the handyman and tools. I love to work and built. All things symbolic, then finally the (O [Hunter]) to play out those early fantasies.”

Rader ended this part abruptly, but took it up again, the following day. “While I was writing last night, forgot to mention a castle need a big fireplace, for warmth, but don’t get too close, will be burned.” This, I knew, referred to Holmes’ furnace for victim disposal. “Also the Den or whoever lived there might have their collections or souvenirs, pics, jewelry, locks of hair or old clothes of certain appeal. The Virals [victims] cannot be around all the time, with the mood strikes.”

Quite suddenly, Rader broke into another sidebar: “Please don’t think I’m a hypocrite by writing the above in this letter. Its only there to help. Like I said in the beginning, I want the train to deliver a good story, that may help you and others . . . I really do appreciate people, places and things. I think my life as a good citizen, family man, husband, father show that. It that dark side on the flip side of the coin that need to be understood.”

THE FINAL CODE

This collection of writings and clippings offered a glimpse into Rader’s mind. It was his way of retaining control, playing word games with curious guards, and feeling as if he were still important enough to hide his secrets. I

filled in the rest of the blanks to produce a finished code—at least for the torture barn—that revealed Dennis Rader’s innermost fantasies.

A—*Best Food writing*—BTK fantasies, with food as a metaphor

B—*Virals*—V is for Victims

C—*Towers of Midnight*—the silo. Silos at his maternal grandparents’ farm in Columbus, Kansas, had excited him. Initially, he’d been afraid of the barn, especially the silo. He’d even had nightmares about it. However, coupled with monster movies that had also scared him, the titillation factor had eventually lured him.

D—*Deeper than Dead*—his preferred state for victims. He enjoyed the image of a woman bound and buried, as this book describes. Her eyes and mouth glued shut would show another aspect of control that he liked.

E—*A Duke’s Temptation*—a reference to castles and probably to his own temptation. The last name of the author is Hunter, an image that Rader had adopted for himself.

F—a cover photo of a barn in Kansas

G—*The Swan Thieves*—anything bound or knotted. He included an article for Dawnett labeled “G,” which was about a politician “tied up in knots.” For him, he’d said, this image of female legs, sexy to normal men, had rope bindings.

H—a picture of a silo in Wichita. “You know the silos on hobby farms are a lot like castles, although not for grain,” he’d written.

I—refers to the cats on the farm that he thought of as “spooky” and that he had hanged as his first kills

J—a picture of a herding dog. Rader’s dog, Dudley, had looked like this dog, and Dudley was a code name for the *Dudley Do-Right* cartoon.

K—a reference to Dawnett, by her real name

L—the X-factor. Rader had written in a letter during his BTK spree that serial killers suffered from “Factor X,” which set them apart from normal people.

M—the brush factor—refers to Rader’s first orgasm, near a hedge

N—refers to girls

O—Hunter—refers to Rader

P—“Captivating, overpowering obsession, engrossing”—Rader’s fantasies

Q—*Virals*—refers to victims

R—picture of a blonde woman (“she has that look”)

S—*Towers of Midnight*—a reference to the castle

T—Wheel of Time: refers to “Spin the Bottle,” Rader’s name for the torture wheels he had devised in his imagination. He had two versions. In the first, a woman would be tied to the wheel with her legs spread. Rader would place torture apparatuses in various positions around this wheel. He would then spin the wheel and, wherever it stopped (with the marker between the woman’s legs), would indicate the torture to which she would be subjected. The second version also featured a person bound to a wheel, but this one would be placed in water. The victim would start with her head in the air and her feet in the water. Rader would spin the wheel and let it stop wherever it did. He would leave the woman in this position for a while. Eventually, after enough spins, she would drown.

U—*Deeper than Dead*—the same as D

V—the circle around a woman’s head—refers to whatever that article was about. In this case, it brought attention to a woman on the cover of the book by “Hunter,” with her eyes closed. Since a “V” stood outside the circle, she had the look of a victim.

W—“Captivate the women.”

OVERVIEW

To me, Rader posed a particular challenge: to figure out his Factor X. His coded descriptions revealed a lot about the way his mind worked. I could see the typical compartmentalization of a predatory serial killer who wants to feed his inner beast while posing as normal—even safe. His disjointed writing, with its corresponding changes in energy level, expressed the caged but still hungry animal. Despite Rader’s stated desire to focus now on being “Christian,” his fantasies of “cookies” and “tangy treats,” and “fudge Sundies” still entertained him. They kept alive for him the notion that he mattered, that he was valuable, even if he had to be so as a monster. Without this, he would sink into oblivion. This fate he could not bear. Nor could he change what had aroused him for so many years.

Long before serial killers were “cool,” and even before they were formally called serial killers, Rader had looked to these offenders to *teach* him. He absorbed their methods and practiced their approaches. He lacked creative intelligence, but he could follow a pattern and add some flourishes. He also learned from their mistakes.

But Rader had done more than just learn techniques. He had fashioned his very persona from these predatory role models, and his codes had hidden his fantasies. He’d been color-coding his “virals” since he’d first started drawing them. He could spend time with “Monique,” a bound, tortured child, while going about his business as a seemingly ordinary family man. He could write down a string of memorized symbols to induce a violent fantasy while “just doodling.” Rader is one of the few serial killers known to have organized his experience like this, making his “projects” into a layered enterprise. He had aspired to be elite, and his complex system, with its associations of espionage, convinced him that he was.

This was my initial experience with Rader’s letters. Eventually, I grew used to them. We corresponded from 2010 to 2015. During this time, I also had access to the letters that he wrote to Dawnett (as well as to her perspective on him from numerous visits and phone calls). I even visited Kansas to see his hunting grounds and follow his maps.

I can now look at my initial list of codes with full comprehension. This complicated letter was an overview of his life. I invite readers who finish this book to return to this introduction and see for themselves. As opaque as

it might seem at this moment, it's really all quite clear once you have been inside Rader's mind for a while.

The psychological trajectory of Rader's life shows how and why this seemingly ordinary Midwestern boy grew up to become a serial killer.

A GLOSSARY

Because some readers might grow confused with Rader's lexicon, I provide a brief glossary of key phrases. First, here's a code that I structured according to some of Rader's favorite things—threes, knots, caves, and gardens—then shared with him.

“The design will be a Knot Garden (KG). General items will be topsoil (TS), and deeper stuff, where we cultivate, will be cave plants (CP)—ferns and mushrooms. Items that seem unnecessary are weeds, and we'll use mulch to keep them from interfering with the main harvest. Critter Control, marigolds, and Rabbit Scram (3) are repellants for keeping things out. We'll keep the seed packets [his letters] with the rakes, pruning sheers, and trowels (3 tools) in the tool shed [my office], and the vine-covered trellis (vine) will be the overarching narrative. A false violet is a distractor, and bleeding hearts (BH) symbolize death. A windbreak screen is for interference, ‘water’ will be my suggestions for getting seeds to grow, and the sundial (SD) will designate the urgency of time and deadlines (if needed). Minotaurs are fertilizer.

“Caves have 3 zones: entrance, twilight and dark. The entrance has light to support many types of plants such as trees and grasses. In the twilight zone, some light is able to penetrate, but it is not enough to support most plant life. However, you will find mosses and ferns. The dark zone has no natural light and can support only the hardiest plants: fungi and algae. Plants that live in this region have adapted to life in low-light conditions. Fungi can thrive in dark places.”

The following list includes many of the terms and abbreviations Rader used in our correspondence.

BDSM: Bondage and discipline, sadomasochism
BE: breaking-and-entering
BH: refers to his murders by number (Bleeding Hearts)
Big G: orgasm (gratification)
Cave: where Rader lives now, his cell in segregation

C/M: cat-and-mouse game played with letters and packages to police
Cube, cubing: several sides of his personality, compartmentalized
DTPG: Death to pretty girls
Disneyland: see motel parties
Hidey Holes: secret places to stash items stolen from victims, as well as sexual material and bondage paraphernalia
Hit: a murder
Minotaurs: serial killers
Motel parties: autoerotic bondage sessions performed in motel rooms
Projects, PJs: the murder incidents, as well as people he stalked or homes where he broke in
Put down: kill
SBT—Sparky Big Time (highly arousing)
SF—sexual fantasies
Slick Ads: female figures cut from magazine ads, on which Rader would draw gags and bindings for his own enjoyment; he placed them on 3x5 cards

1 THE DEATH PATH

You win if people think they are going to be okay, they are going to be out of harm's way.
Dennis Rader

CASE NO. 05CR498

Wichita PD officers responded to a call on the afternoon of January 15, 1974, at 803 North Edgemoor Street, at the corner of Murdock. Three teenagers arriving home from school had discovered their father and mother murdered inside. The police entered the white corner bungalow and saw a purse on the floor, with the contents dumped out. In the kitchen was an open billfold.

In the southwest bedroom, they found an adult male, Joseph Otero, on the floor. His ankles were tied with white cord and his hands bound behind him. One of the children had cut the rope that had held a plastic bag in place over his head. The knife used lay beside the body.

On the bed was his wife, Julie, strangled, with her ankles bound and her hands tied behind her back. Both bodies were cold and stiff. On the floor in another bedroom, which the children had not discovered, was the body of nine-year-old Joseph, Jr. His hands and ankles had been bound with cord from a venetian blind. A pillowcase had been placed over his head, covered with two plastic bags and a T-shirt.

From items in the kitchen, it appeared as if the family had been interrupted while preparing lunch. The older children had found the family dog in the backyard, which was highly unusual. The phone line had been cut and the family's car, an Oldsmobile Vista Cruiser, was missing. The children informed officers that they had lived in this home just nine weeks.

An officer entered the basement with a flashlight. In a storage area, he bumped into the body of eleven-year-old Josephine, hanging

from a sewer pipe. She wore socks and a sweatshirt, and her panties were pulled down. Her bra had been cut in front. A cord wrapped her ankles and another was around her knees. Her hands were bound behind her back. All of the cords, including the one used to hang her, were the kind used on venetian blinds. Knots in the cords were expertly tied. A dried substance on her leg and areas around her would turn out to be semen.

The autopsies of all of the Oteros showed that they had been slowly strangled.

The surviving children described being taken to school that morning. Their father, hurt in an accident, was returning to their home instead of going to work. Thirteen-year-old Carmen and fourteen-year-old Danny had discovered the bodies and attempted to cut the cords. They tried to call for help, but had found the phone line cut, so they ran to a neighbor. The oldest boy, Charlie, fifteen, had then arrived home.

Two witnesses described the driver of the Otero car that morning as dark or swarthy. The missing car was found that evening, parked at a Dillons grocery store a half mile away. The keys were missing. The fingerprints lifted by police failed to identify a suspect.

Officers discovered from talking with the surviving children that their father's watch was missing, as well as a radio from their nine-year-old brother's room.

A few suspects emerged but no one was arrested.

THE KILLER

"I like corner houses away from the normal traffic, or next-door neighbor," says Rader. "I looked for that.

"There were harbingers of what was to come. By looking over the other previous years, the ladder to the Dark Side was there in 1971 and '72. [The year] 1973 just added more steps. It all released after I was laid off. As 1974 came about, gasoline prices were unheard of [climbing from an average of 38 cents/gallon to 55 cents/gallon].

“The aviation industry suffered like so many others. Jobs by the thousands were lost in the ‘energy crunch.’ Cessna had been my ideal job, working in the electrical tool and die part of the plant. It was a challenging job, but one that I was learning to love. My junior college degree helped, as well as my past work with communications in the Air Force. We had built wire harness racks, special electrical test equipment, measured the layout of wiring of new planes, and worked closely with the people who made the electrical wiring for planes, and installed it.

“My boss at Cessna was very understanding, and also as upset as me. To smooth things over, he got the okay for me to ride on a Citation-Jet during its final checkout flight. I was supposed to be an electrical tech, for a ride-along inspection. Beyond this late afternoon thrill, the real doom and despair loomed ahead of me as I left the place for the last time. For some strange reason I loaded up some small parts, like switches, and snuck them out, perhaps to make Cessna pay. I was angry and ready to act.

“I had low frustration tolerance in stressful situations. If criticized, especially if I’m right, I literally explode, don’t count to ten. I get hot, break into a sweat and seek mental revenge. I believe I’m too smart to ‘go postal,’ so if I made a revenge attack, it would be with stealth, and planned. Loss of personal power can cause burning resentment. Frustration seems to be a key. Either the system or a person not understanding me on the issue surrounding the problem. I believe job loss cause a lot of anger and frustration. Ego is the key. Where other people can deal with it, I bury it and it turn into frustration and sometime I want to get even. When you are hurt, you react to strike back.

“That evening, [my wife] Paula went off to a musical club, a group she sang with. I was home alone, depressed and mad at the world. I decided to go out and do something bad. With the loss of a job, my mind slipped into sex. But I had already locked in on a neighborhood and cased it well. I drove Paula there to work quite regularly. We also ate lunch together in that area and did some shopping. I felt comfortable to prowl and stalk there.

“I drove there and parked on a side street. I approached a house on Old Manor and Ninth. It was a corner lot. There were no lights on, a dead give away in the early evening that no one was home. I cased the outside perimeter, rested and listened. I made the decision. I knocked on the front window, reached in, waited for a plane or car passing by to mask the breaking glass sounds, and unlocked the door. There was no alarm and no

back porch light. I may have cut the phone line. Once in, I encountered a dog. It growled, but as I moved around, it stayed away from me. The house a mess, as though they were moving or had a family fight. At that time, I seemed more interested in small things to keep, not sexual. I took some drill bits, a couple of tools, a hatchet, perhaps some ink pens, or odds and ends. I found a pillowcase to carry them. I left the house, and hid the pillowcase in a nearby bush, to pick up as I left the area.

“I drove home, getting there before Paula, and told her about the layoff.

“The BE [breaking and entering] at Old Manor was the start of home invasion themes. Maybe it was a rejection of society. Control of the house was the key element, what they thought was safe in their castles. I also think the early Peeping Tom experiences and the voyeur feelings I got around a home were very strong to me.

“Without employment and waiting for classes at Wichita State University to begin, I was pretty low. I had time to think dark thoughts. I was walking around the Twin Lakes Mall area. It was very cold. In prior years, I’d twice tried to kidnap someone and had failed. But I wanted to try again.

“I saw a bank teller at the Twin Lakes Bank. I had seen her when Paula and I did business there. I knew when she had a lunch hour. This bank had routines. People with routines are vulnerable to me. I had watched people come and go at the bank into the parking lot. I could easily watch from the Sears store. I had prowled and trolled the Twin Lakes area for sometime. I would don my green jeans, blue or green sweatshirt, wind jacket, walking shoes, coat, and ski mask. I carried a knife, tape, cord, .357 Mag Ruger, Western style, and walked the mall and surrounding areas, looking for a victim. I imagined forcing myself to their car, making them lie down in the front seat, and quickly tying or taping their hands. I would drive away to an old barn, a farm site northwest of Valley Center. There I would do my sexually murder, then hide the body.

“The bank teller parked her car across the street of 21st North. Many cars there could shield me in hiding. I knew her car. Timed like a clock, she entered her car. I approached and tried to force myself in. She screamed and fought back. I finally gave up and told her I’m sorry. I was trying to take a vehicle and leave the area. It was a ruse. That calmed her down. I told her I was going to leave her alone and I left quickly.

“This was a dilemma for me. I chose to flee instead of attack in daylight. Heading northwest along the other shopping area, I walked fast and then ran. Behind one store’s alley, I hid all my items, hoping no one would find them, including my coat and ski mask. Now I wore only a wind jacket. I walked to a fast food place and ordered some food, to hide my deeds. I was sure the police would soon be in the area. I then moved slowly from business to business, back to my vehicle, moving with everyone else, to not draw attention.

“Cold and frustrated, I headed back to the alley, quickly picked up my hidden items, and drove home. Later, I fantasized about her and me at the farm site. Perhaps I drew a picture or made a drawing of how it was going to be. Afterward, I seldom went to the bank. I always had an excuse. If I did go, I wore sunglasses and avoided that teller. I made a rule to never return to an area where I had tried and failed.

“I was about to enter Wichita State University the next week, on the GI Bill, but my wife Paula was the breadwinner. I felt pretty low. After my failed attempts at kidnapping, I decided that I would take a victim in a house. I would use the cover of a house or garage to get them into a car to take out to the farm. At this time, I spotted Julie Otero.

“My main theme was to hang someone. The act of hanging was sexually exciting to me—the elements of being bound or straining with the rope or noose around the neck, legs bound, and no escape. For self-gratification, I’d hanged myself, to the point of almost passing out. In my plan for the Oteros, I had an old barn in mind. I would take the mother and kids from the house and bring them there. We could be completely alone and I could better control them. I loved old barns, and there were several located around Wichita that I could use for hanging victims.

“The Oteros were picked due to my trolling, stalking, then locking in. I like the Hispanic people, the females look sexy to me; once spotted the stalking stage takes place. The trolling stage is when you’re trolling for them. The stalking stage is when you’ve walked in on them. I had watched the houses in the Otero neighborhood. Even if they were gone on the day I picked, I would take up the next one. I could change to someone else.

“I bought rough hemp rope, one-quarter inch thick, at the drugstore at the southeast corner of Hillside and East Central, a favorite place to thumb through detective magazines and shop for bondage items. Much like *In*

Cold Blood, the two [killers] pre-shopping before they attacked the Clutter Family.”

Rader would eventually call his targets “projects,” naming each according to specific characteristics. He also called them ‘hits.’ This one would become Project Little Mex. To accomplish it, he had driven and walked by the house a few times and had formulated a ruse. Pretending to be a wanted man, he believed, would make the woman feel slightly safer, more assured that she would survive the encounter.

“You win if people think they are going to be okay, they are going to be out of harm’s way. Basically, there’s going to be a minimum [struggle], and you win.”

Rader had waited for his wife to go to work before donning his Air Force parka and driving into Wichita. “It was a very cold morning. I removed the frost from Paula’s car and waited for her to leave. Paula off to work. Fantasies at play. My hit kit was all ready. What was in my mind? A high, like an adrenaline rush. Something had taken over and was in control. I had pre-planned the Oteros, but didn’t know what to expect inside or how it was going to happen. I dressed in my Air Force parka and drove to the area in my white Chevy Impala. I parked in the parking lot of a store at Edgemoor and Central. I crossed the street and walked north on the first side street west of Edgemoor to their house, 803. I’m partial to the number 3. I tried to pick houses with 3 or 6 in the number.

“My heart beat fast. This had been more of a game, daring myself and pushing the limit. The fantasy had begun to crystallize sharply.”

He arrived at precisely 8:20 a.m., because he knew the family’s daily routines: The man of the house left for work by eight, the older kids had been taken to school (although he would later say he did not know about them), and only the mother and two small children remained home. In short, his target was at her most vulnerable.

It had taken weeks to collect this information after he’d first seen her, but Rader had savored every minute of anticipation. He had walked around the house to see it from several sides. The boy, he believed, he could quickly dispatch. With the females, he would take his time. “These people were *selected*.”

He jumped the fence and entered the backyard. “I cut the phone wire.” He saw paw prints in the snow and hesitated. He nearly walked away. “Inner debate over whether to go through with it, but it was like a snowball

rolling down a hill. I actually had second thoughts, seeing the dog prints in the snow. If they let it out, it surely would bark at me or attack me. I wasn't afraid, but I could not predict its actions.

"I had my cords with me and some were already pre-knotted. I had a gun, a .22 LR Woodsman Auto Target Pistol. But I had not 'yard cased' the house. If I had, and had seen the dog, I probably would not have pursued the Oteros. My drive-by had been to find out who lived there. I had even visited the small library at Oliver and Central and found the telephone number in the book. I'd called them and a female answered. I gave them the 'wrong number' excuse.

"I had planned on taking them hostage in the garage, Mrs. Otero and the kids. I had watched them, the three go to school a couple of times, following them. I had it all planned, but did not know about the dog. Also, the garage door was open, facing the street.

"I heard voices inside. I thought about leaving, but what if someone saw me exit the back yard? Then the door opened! Too late! The back door opened, and my nightmare and theirs became one.

"Gun in hand, I went in. All except Mr. Otero were present. He came from the bedroom at the sound of the wife's voice. Mr. Otero thought it was a joke, put up by his brother-law. He also noticed my Air Force parka. I quickly grab him by the back collar. I showed him the gun and told him it was a .22 LR, with hollow points and a hair trigger. He knew it was no joke.

"To ease tension, there was some friendly talk about the Air Force years, tech school, etc. I told them I needed money and food, and was wanted by police. I was AWOL from the Air Force. I located the car keys, the purse and his wallet. They told me the car was empty on gas. I guess they didn't have very much money. Mr. Otero said I could take the typewriter from the southwest bedroom and hock it for gas money, and just leave them alone. There was no panic yet.

"After I got in the house, I lost control of it. I basically panicked. The dog was a real problem, so I asked Mr. Otero to get the dog out. It was a shorthaired dog that didn't like cold, so they first put it in the bedroom or basement, but it carried on so, it finally had to go outside! I held on to Mr. Otero's collar and watched Mrs. Otero closely, threatening them all if they didn't cooperate. Mr. Otero told the family to be calm and do as I said."

Rader acquired Joseph Otero's watch. "I either asked him to take the watch off in the kitchen or I removed it after he died."

Despite doubts about going through with the plan to kill them, he believed he had to. “They could ID me. I wore no mask, although I had one, and maybe I had forgot to pull it down. It was a stocking cap type ski mask. I felt like leaving them as they were, but something ‘Dark’ told me to murder them. They could recognize me. And I made a decision to go ahead and put them down, to strangle them.

“I had brought a first-aid roll of adhesive tape, used it at first on all of the members, but they complained of numbness and hurt. I redid it with white clothesline cord. (Later I switched to black electrical tape or duct tape. People bound with tape were sexually exciting to me.)

“They started complaining about being tied up. And I re-loosened the bonds a couple of times. I tried to make Mr. Otero as comfortable as I could. Apparently he had a cracked rib from a car accident. So I put a pillow down for his head and a parka or a coat underneath him.

“When all four were bound, I decided to gag each, using pillowcases, socks, and T-shirts. I remember Josephine’s long hair getting in the way. Mrs. Otero asked why they were being gagged, and to keep her calm, I told her I’d call the police after I cleared the area.

“Due to his injury, I tied Mr. Otero’s hand with tape to the bedpost leg, northwest on the bed. I tied Mrs. Otero, then Josephine, and finally Joseph. My hands were encased in rubber gloves, so they were tired. I was sweating.

“I think I wrapped the rope around Mr. Otero’s neck. I had never strangled before, didn’t realize how long it took, and the victim was fighting. Then I strangled Mrs. Otero. Once she quit moving, I let pressure up. Next was Josephine. She asked, ‘What’s going on?’ I told her, I had put her parents to sleep, and you’re next. I strangled her until she quit moving. By that time Joseph [Jr] was up and crying, and Mr. Otero was waking up. I decided to use the plastic bags.

“I then proceeded to Joseph [Jr.] and placed a bag over his head. By then Ms. Otero was awake. She realized the fatal threat to her and her family, as Joseph struggled. She pleaded with me to stop. Josephine was still out. Mr. Otero was struggling, trying to rub a hole in the bag on the bedpost. Mrs. Otero was getting hysterical and making a lot of noise. I about decided to leave, but since I had already crossed the ‘death path,’ I strangled her with a clove-hitch. Before I applied pressure, she said, ‘May

God have mercy on your soul!’ I covered her face with a flower print pillowcase.

“I found a belt and applied to Mr. Otero’s neck, over the bag. He quit moving.

“The plastic bags were the one you buy in a store, the gallon size, white. I used gloves to place them in another bag that I carried.

“Realizing the hole in the bag problem, I found a T-shirt and another plastic bag, picked up Joseph, Jr. and moved him to a bed in the center bedroom. I covered his head with the T-shirt, and bag and tied it shut. He struggled, rolled off the bed, and then quit.

“The police report mentioned a chair that maybe I sat on to watch him die, but that’s not true. It could be that I placed it there to keep him still while putting on the T-shirt and bag in place or against the bed to keep him from rolling off. Many people think I tortured the Oteros and killed them in a sadistic way [by reviving them]. But the [multiple] strangle marks were there because I hadn’t learn how to strangle quickly. The bags helped to kill faster. But I had used bags in self-bondage, and knew the helpless feeling of no air, and no way to get the bag off. In self bondage you had to be very careful with bags and restraint of hands.

“I had strangled cats, but had never strangled anyone before, so I really don’t know how much pressure you had to put on a person or how long it would take. Both their hands and their feet were tied up.

“I had worked quick. I strangled Mrs. Otero and she went out. I thought she was dead. I strangled Josephine. She passed out. I thought she was dead, too. And then I went over and put a bag on Jr.’s head, and then, if I remember right, Mrs. Otero came back. I went back and strangled her again, and finally killed her.

“After Joseph, Jr. died, the house was quiet. Josephine was still out. I had not put a cord or rope on her neck, or a bag. This is where my ‘Dark Sadistic Self’ came to play. I wanted to hang her. I had made a rope noose prior, a rough hemp rope and by chance had put four loops in the noose.

“With hanging in mind, I searched the house, found the basement sewer pipe and attached the hangman’s rope to it. I then return to her. She was awake, but lethargic. I picked her up and carried her to the basement rec room. She was not crying or protesting or fighting me. I removed her pants, pulled her panties down, either cut or tore her bra open, exposing her breasts, then pulled her knit shirt back down, retied her ankles and knees,

and attached the rope to her wrists. I ask her if her parents had a camera, as I wanted a picture of her bound. (Later on I obtain a Polaroid camera, the same one I used for my self-portraits of bondage.)

“She said no, so I moved her onto the floor below the hangman’s noose. I told her she would go to sleep and be in heaven with her folks and brother. Her eyes showed shock. I applied the noose, and lifted her up and tighten the rope, or tied it off. I was overwhelmed with excitement; I touched her breasts and masturbated. The act of hanging alone is bad, and the media played this up big with her toes only a few inches off the floor. It just happened that this is the way she ended up, it wasn’t planned to look that way.”

AFTERMATH

“I went through the house, kind of cleaned it up. It’s called the right-hand rule; you go from room to room. I picked everything up. I locked the back door before I left. The dog was still in the yard. One thing the police never discovered. I was so thirsty. I was encased with sweat. I started this [ritual] at the Oteros, taking a glass from the kitchen, getting a drink, wiping it dry and replacing it. I would do this at other places as well. It became sort of a secret trademark.

“I cleaned the house up a bit, made sure everything was packed up. After checking the house, I turned the thermostat up to help throw the time of death off (I read this in a book). I had taken Otero’s watch, an aviation type watch, and a transistor radio I found somewhere in the house. [He would later deny to the police that he took a radio.] I kept the watch many years, wore it occasionally, and finally threw it into the Chisholm Creek on Hydraulic near 37th N. I used that creek for dumping small victim items. The radio I sold at a garage sale.

“It was bright and sunny when I left, and I worried about the mailman and people on the street seeing me. I had asked the Oteros when they got their mail, and time [was] running out. I needed to depart. I remember watching where I stepped as I proceeded to the garage. I started their car, and, yes, it was out of gas. If I had kidnapped them with it, not knowing, that would have been a big problem. I backed out, made sure to conceal my

face, and drove west on Murdock over to Ninth, then down Oliver to Dillons. I entered the south alley and parked in the lot.

“I got out and started walking south along King’s Row. Along the way, I threw the keys away in a drain. I had parked in the Thrift Shop parking lot at the southwest corner of Central and N. Edgemoor. Just then, I realized my Buck knife [was] missing. A dilemma, what to do? Had I left it in Oteros’ car? Had I locked the car door after I wiped it clean? Was the knife back at the Oteros’ home?

“I decided not to walk to either place. I drove my Chevy Impala back to their house and into their garage. I quickly checked the backyard. The dog was unhappy with me but kept its distance. I found the knife by the cut telephone line box. I picked it up and drove home.”

Rader had a headache and he was afraid. He had just murdered four people! He’d been careful, but had he missed anything, he wondered, that would lead the police to him? He had not expected such a dramatic experience. But he wanted to be very careful. No mistakes. His next step was to go to the woods to burn his pre-crime notes and sketches, along with remnants of the rope. This one in particular—his first to be used in a murder—proved difficult to discard. But he knew from reading true crime books about mistakes that other killers had made and he was not about to join that club. He finished in time to greet his wife as she came home from work. To her, he acted the same as usual. But he knew he had crossed a significant threshold—the “death path.”

When he found time to be alone, Rader recorded what he had done in a journal, contemplating a moniker, “B.T.K.”—bind them, torture them, kill them. All serial killers had a deadly moniker. He expected to become as infamous one day as Jack the Ripper. “Once you do this, you have an identity.”

He could hardly wait to read about what the police had to say. Maybe someone would come along and write the next *In Cold Blood*! To him, this was a “big story.” Later, he would admit that he had imagined enslaving all four of his victims in the afterlife, each with a different role to fulfill his sexual fantasies. To police, he would describe these roles: Joseph Otero Senior would be a bodyguard; Julie would bathe and serve him, while the children would be sex toys. He would teach Josephine about S&M practices.

When he contemplates how his fantasies about murder, which started young, turned to action, Rader comments, “They say, ‘Idle hands, the devil’s playpen.’ I didn’t go to bed one night, wake up and say, ‘This is it.’ For fire to burn, you have to have three elements: Heat, fuel, and air.

“The burning desire to increase the sexual fantasy role, I believe much like a male after a female for sex. The relief of the Big G [orgasm]. But also sharing time together as lasting dark memories. I believe Factor X played a role as perverted sex. I don’t recall the BHS [victims] as loving memories, they’re still very crystal clear if I think about them. Like man and woman with marriage, you collect memorabilia to help keep memories. To build a long-lasting fire, you need more than one piece of fuel. I had many PJs but not all hits. What would have made that [murder] bigger and hotter? More air.

“Let’s say that air is opportunity. Recent job loss, winter, time alone at home, time to fantasize, time to invent ruses, time to prowl, and time to strike. I had night classes, could study late. Air is time alone. Fantasy is heat. I think it’s the stalking and fantasies. You dream, act it out in your mind, plan, get a date and try. If you replay an event in your mind long enough, you come to believe it. The key, I think, the real spark to ignite the Bad Fires, is idle hands. Without time constraints, other projects would have succeeded.

“Finally, at Otero, Josephine reminded me of a ‘Mickey Mouse’ female I had fantasized over and over [referring to Mouseketeer Annette Funicello], of this female being in bondage helpless, with me in complete control of her life, even back in the late ’50s.

“I was 9 or 10 when I saw AF on *The Mickey Mouse Club*. She grew and developed into a starlet with a woman’s figure. Millions of boys my age were smitten. I had a terrible crush on her. Her voice, dark hair with an Italian flare, she quickly became my first mental stalking. Later, her beach party movies added to my lusting fuel. Many a night I lay in bed fantasizing about her in a California lighthouse or castle, in my dungeon of Death To Pretty Girls. I collected TV magazine pictures of her. My mom took a magazine, *Modern Romance*, *Starlet Review*. They became fuel for my upcoming slick ads collection. I didn’t have to buy them, or I was embarrassed to do so, so I sneak-read them at home and then awaited the day that Mom would put them in the basement. They would disappear into my world.

“In many ways, AF started me on the female stalker road. I became the werewolf to chase her down on a full moon, the Dracula to bite her, my teeth sinking into the wonderful flesh of upcoming womanhood, or the Mummy wrapping her up tight, defenseless, at the mercy of me!”

Recalling how difficult it had been to strangle his victims, Rader purchased a rubber ball, labeled “Life is Good,” to use to strengthen his hands. “I saw in a movie about a Minotaur [serial killer] toughening up the hands. I had sport balls at home, work, in vehicle to practice and exercise my hands. I do have large hands. Exercise with a handball help blood circulation and to keep the hands fit.

“There was excitement in trying something dangerous. Then it happens and afterward, you wish it hadn’t. It’s like playing in quicksand. There’s fear and excitement, but then you’re stuck.”

REFLECTIONS

Several true crime authors have noted the similarities between the Otero mass murder and the murder of the Clutter family described in Truman Capote’s classic crime narrative, *In Cold Blood*. It featured drifters Dick Hickock and Perry Smith, a couple of former inmates, arriving at night on November 15, 1959, at the Clutter home in Holcomb, Kansas, looking for money. They bound Herb Clutter, his wife, son, and daughter, shooting each one in a separate room. “No witnesses,” Hickock had insisted. Capote records how Smith and Hickock were tracked, arrested, tried, and executed.

At the time of the incident, Rader was fourteen. He was in the car with a girl who had figured into his adolescent fantasies, and who had been the object of some adolescent voyeurism. “I felt so backward. I had a crush on her.” The news came over the radio. Holcomb was just over two hundred miles to the west. The incident created quite a buzz in the area, but what fascinated Rader was the use of ropes to bind the victims. “I couldn’t get it out of my mind. I wanted to do that to the girl.” Years later, he would see many more parallels, but the book and film would not come out until 1966 and 1967, respectively. It first aired on television in 1972, and Dawnett is certain that it showed not long before the Otero murders.

“I probably did see it then. If you recall, Hickock and Smith [were] shopping for restraints. That hit me hard, for I bought adhesive tape rolls

and nylon clothesline cord, also gallon-size white plastic bags. So my subconscious mind had a role in thinking about and buying certain items. I also bought ¼ inch hemp rope and ¼ inch cotton clothesline rope. I used these on the Oteros. I remember the news about their [Hickock's and Smith's] executions [in 1965], and thought that I would want to be hanged if caught."

Although the Otero mass murder mirrored some aspects of the Clutter incident, Rader had not expected Joseph, Sr., to be present. Still, his hit kit was similar: tape, binding cords, a gun and a map (for Rader, a mental map). He took a radio, like Hickock and Smith, but also a watch, and he temporarily stole the Oteros' car. Rader compared the basement area of the Clutter house, where Herb and his son were killed, to the torture dungeons of his fantasies. "I did bondage in basements, at home in Seneca Street [his parents' home]." He had taken Josephine into the basement to replicate the excitement he derived from his own self-bondage. He used a sewer pipe to hang her because "I used a sewer pipe for gratification. I knew they were sturdy."

Rader notes that threes show up in several items related to Hickock and Smith: "Hanged in 1965: 9 and 6 are multiples of three. The crime occurred in 1959. They were buried in Section 34, row 29 in Lansing, Kansas."

Since references to three arise frequently in this book, I introduce Rader's comment about this number here: "I first became aware of 3s in my life in my late twenties, but have always had a tendency to do things in threes or multiples of three. I would buy three pair of slacks, for example, or three of the same color of sock. Maybe it relates to the Bible, the Father, Son and Holy Ghost. The number 3 is mystical to me."

He made a long list for me of how the number 3 had figured in his life: three childhood girlfriends, for example, three grade school friends, and three college sweethearts. He was born on the ninth day of the third month of 1945, and graduated high school in 1963. Three years later (1966), he entered the Air Force. Eventually, the number 3 caught his attention in such things as addresses of, and dates for, potential projects.

To identify Factor X, 1945 is our starting point.

2 FIRST INKLINGS OF TROUBLE

Our childhood years, I feel, determine much of what happens in adulthood, imprinting messages like computer chips. We are programmed on the brain [in ways] that we are totally unaware of. Sins pick us according to our weaknesses, and sometimes it run in the family line.

Mine were selfishness, sex and control.

Dennis Rader

In 1974, most people knew relatively little about serial murder. Ted Bundy had begun killing around Seattle, but the “Son of Sam” would not terrorize New York for another two years. Looking back, Albert DeSalvo had been nailed in ’64 as the Boston Strangler, the same decade when the Zodiac terrorized San Francisco. The early 1970s had seen the opening of the mass graves of migrant workers killed by Juan Corona in California, as well as Houston’s “Candy Man”—a trio of killers who tortured street kids in fatal S&M parties. Alfred Hitchcock’s *Psycho* (1960) had introduced the nation to a compartmentalized killer and the FBI had just offered a psychology course that would evolve into the famed Behavioral Analysis Unit.

As the police ran into dead ends in the Otero investigation, Rader carefully clipped the articles. “I watched the news but not overly interested. I wait until the newspapers were put in the pile before I carefully clipped them to keep.”

He’d known since he was young that he would become a killer. His “little friend”—the monster in his brain—was always present, he said, urging him on. “I first started seeing or thinking, monsters, at age 3–4. I can see a figure in everyday things. Often wonder if that had something to do with me later. I didn’t want to be helpless.”

This chapter features different areas of Rader’s childhood and early teen years, showing his development from an average kid with an extended family to the “lone wolf” teen who sought out old barns and railroad tracks for exercising his erotic fantasies. What follows are thematic aspects of Rader’s early years, rather than a strict chronology.

FAMILY TIES

“I was born in the morning on March 9, 1945, a few months before World War II ended in the small southeast Kansas town, Columbus. My mom was 20 and my dad was 23. I was their first child—the first of four. They say I was born with a frown and a dimple.

“It is ironic that my early memories in childhood would start on Elm Street in Columbus and my final days before life incarceration would end up [on] West Elm, the Sedgwick County Detention Facility in Wichita, Kansas. I have always believed in related matters—numbers, events, history repeating itself, a closed circle or bad omens. It happens.

“My Mom was Dorothea Mae Cook Rader. She was attractive, a cheerleader in high school, a majorette, and she also played the clarinet. My Dad, William Elvin Rader, a Marine, was still in the Pacific when I was born, on Midway Island. Both came from Southeast Kansas, where their folks lived. They met as high school sweethearts, and married in 1943. Dad was stationed at Camp Pendleton. Mom, still a senior at high school, had traveled by train out to San Diego by herself. Their honeymoon was brief, and Mom returned home to finish senior year. They moved in next to my mother’s folks, the Cooks, in the years 1945–1948, probably after Dad got out of the Marines and started work in Columbus as a car mechanic.

“We all have memories of our childhood days, bits and pieces more of a jigsaw puzzle, for as hard as we can think and try to remember, there are a lot of missing pieces. I recall my grandparents’ places better than my first home. [Both sets of grandparents had farms around Columbus, and Rader spent a lot of time there—at least a month each summer, alternating between the farms, and a “long winter” at the Cook farm when his second brother was born in December 1949.] I can’t recall my Dad at all until we moved from Columbus to Wichita, when I was 3 or 4. Most of my memories are from the Cook farm.

“I had very loving grandparents. Their house was two-story, wood frame, white of color and had a front porch—a common feature in the ’30s and ’40s. Two pillars with brick support. One of my early memories there: a thunderstorm was in progress. I was frightened with the thunder and lightning, so my grandma tells me it’s only a potato wagon crossing a bridge, the noise is potatoes falling out and hitting the planks.

“Grandma Cook always wore common print dresses, house or work dresses. She had long hair and would braid it every day.

“Grandpa, a barber by trade, loved pool halls. He’d owned one in Columbus that had a barbershop in the front, pool hall in the back, and tables to play Dominoes, drink beer or visit. He always drove Packard automobiles.

“My Grandma Cook was a wonderful person, very helpful, but not openly friendly. At times, distant, like her mind was somewhere else, much like my mom. Could she and Mom have been chasing the better life? Maybe an early sign of compartmentalizing. My grandfather was a good-hearted man, but I’m sure he had a mean streak. In his youthful days, he had many close brushes with the law. Very conservative and always looking for greener pastures. He always had a dream.

“My mom’s family did not go to church and there was no Christian atmosphere at the Cook place. Mom would do things I thought were not Christian. She smoked, or watched TV when she should have been helping us kids. At times, it appeared she would rather have a third party involved, a friend or a book, instead of us. [She suffered serious post-partum depression after the fourth son was born, in part because she had hoped for a girl.] She did not become a very close friend to me.

“On my dad’s side, it was totally different. They had amiable Christian traits. There was prayer, Bible study, church, and Christian symbols and pictures around the house. While at Raders’ farm, we always attended Sunday School and church. Dad would try daily Bible studies and family prayer time at home, but usually it only happen at meals and bedtime.

“A gene I picked up was Cook’s entrepreneurship or ‘grass is always greener on the other side of the fence.’ Mom was aggressive in such matters. Dad was more settled down. He made a good home and living environment, and planned for the future. Mom never seemed happy with what we had, always pushing Dad for nicer things.

“Another key person from early in my life was my aunt’s son, Larry Sutherland. He was born in 1939. Larry was like a big brother to me, a mentor. He taught me to draw and tell stories. He was the Cooks’ first grandchild, and was favored with gifts and toys, which my brothers and I didn’t have for years. So, it was always nice to visit and play with Larry’s nicer toys.

“One incident has stayed with me from early in childhood. My cousin and I would play or explore a creek south of Elm Street. It had some deep holes. My grandmother tells about one day my cousin and another boy about my age, went to the creek. My cousin came back, but the other boy didn’t. They ask him where the other boy was, and he said, ‘I don’t know, he gone!’ They later found him drowned in the creek.”

It was never clear to Rader how Larry had just walked away when his friend failed to surface, but this sudden and mysterious death of a boy who’d gone out with Larry was disturbing. Larry had not caused the death, but he apparently did nothing to get help.

WEST TO WICHITA

“I must have been four years old at the time our growing family moved from Columbus to Wichita [160 miles away]. We arrived at Central and Madison East of downtown Wichita, on the Northwest corner. We moved into the north part of a duplex, and my dad’s cousin, Bob, lived in the South unit with his wife, Betty, and family.

“My first brother had been born in 1947. Somewhere along, later 1950 or early 1951, we moved from Wichita downtown to the Seneca Street address. I don’t recall the move. I just recall all of sudden being there and having a total new experience of the Riverview area.

“4815 North Seneca was a one-story house with full basement and attached garage. It had two bedrooms, one bath that we all shared, a living room, dining area, and kitchen, an old chicken house or shed, an old homemade fishpond. The house was a few blocks from the Little Arkansas River, a young man’s magnet. That’s where we played.

“Dad had worked on B-25s in the war, and was a mechanic at heart. He started at Boeing when we first moved to Wichita, and at the Seneca address, he worked across the river at KG&E [Kansas Gas & Electric] at the Ripley Plant. He was very proud of his tools, kept them well organized and clean, and got after us kids if we misused them or left them outside dirty. I think many of my organizational skills came from him. He seemed to be well prepared and thought things out for the long haul.

“Somewhere along the line, Mom became good at accounting and bookkeeping, and she later became the main bookkeeper for Leeker’s

Family Food in Wichita and Park City. That math or bookkeeping gene must have passed on to me, for that has been a hobby of mine, to play the stock market and use bookkeeping math, credit/debits, and log books. The family did eventually move from poor lower class to better middle class.

“When Dad worked at Boeing, he met Jack Davis. Jack was a WWII pilot and homebuilder. Dad did some home building for him as a moonlighting job. I believe Davis was a wheeler-dealer and Dad finally saw through that. But I considered them my second family. As the home building business expanded, the Davis family settled into what they called the ‘Big House,’ near our house. Their swimming pool was a wonderful place in the summer to hang out. John Davis, Jack’s son, became my best friend for many years.

“He wasn’t my only good friend. Bobby lived on North Armstrong. His Mom, like Mrs. Davis, was very good with us, did special things, and I joined them on fishing trips. Bobby and I had that ‘mad scientist’ friendship. He was somewhat of a lone wolf.

“Then there was Allen. He was really very smart. Allen, John, Bobby and I [were] the main ‘Riverview gang.’ We hunted together, explored the river, fished, shared stories of ups and downs, and watched movies.

“Dad was a hard worker and good provider. As the years come and went, he laid out a big garden, built a chicken house, raised chickens, made improvements to the land and house, and built a carport after remodeling the garage. My other two brothers, Paul and Billy, and I slept in the same bedroom, and I shared a bed with Paul. Dad or Mom would tuck us in and together we say a nightly prayer, ‘Now I lay me down to sleep . . . ’

“Dad maintained a small garden, and we had added a well to water the garden and yard. We also had a big horse or cattle water tank. Later, I would at times go out to the tank alone, to cool off, bind myself and think sexually thoughts. Sometimes, I would tie my hands and ankles to achieve a climax.

“Dad’s cousin, Bob, moved near us with his wife, Betty. We spent a lot of time at their place and they did as well at our place. Mom and Betty took turns taking care of us. In a way, besides the Riverview moms, Betty became my second mom. She loved poetry, and read all the time. She’d rather read than do anything else. It was from her, reading her poetry books, that the seed to write poetry was planted. She was also very good with word puzzles. She hated cats. She would tell of stories of drowning cats in gunnysacks at her farm. Like me, she thought they held a secret mystical

power, an evil that had to be put down. Her stories may have influenced me to seek them out as bondage victims. I did drown a cat or two.

“We had lots of chickens and a big garden. Part of my chores were to water and feed the chickens and clean up the chicken house. I put the droppings into a compost pile. Around the age of 10, the big garden got smaller, and there were no more chickens. The chicken house became our play area, for a fort and a jail for Cowboys and Indians. For me, it would be the place of dark fantasies.

“I was active in church as a boy. At Zion Lutheran Church, it was the custom to have the young boys be altar boys or acolytes to light and put out the candelabrum in the service, and to assist the Pastor. During one service I felt the Holy Spirit move me. This enlightenment may have been a ‘good spirit’ pivotal point in my life to become a church and Boy Scout leader, and wear the White Hat. I sat on the front pew always directly below the Pastor’s sermon pulpit. That day, I was dressed in a white pullover robe, and felt it glow. For a while I focused sharply on being good. I didn’t cuss, no drinking, or drugs, no sex. I recall one day, everyone brought their 4-H items for display. Some boys used the lord’s name in vain and cussed up a storm. I was so upset, I almost cried at home telling my Mom about it. Yet by that same age, 12–13, I was also starting to think of bondage. I kept these dark thoughts to myself. When I did that, I was lonely. I felt I had no friends, even my folks.

“The only sermon I remember goes along these lines: a man had the most beautiful pond in the country, in a green valley, surrounded by lush trees and colorful flowers and green grass, crystal clear and cool. He guarded it with his life. Allowing no animals or people to drink or use the pond’s water, even the birds. One day, chasing the birds away, he slipped, fell in, and drowned. His selfishness had killed him.

“In a way, that’s what happened to me. Although I’m not dead, to the living world and my family I’m a lost soul.

“The pastor’s daughter was my first real girlfriend. She had brown eyes, a nice, honest, sweet girl. It had to be love because I hurt inside if I couldn’t see her on Sundays. When her dad transferred from the area, I was devastated. I never could accept rejection very well. I believe this is one of my main issues—rejection and attention. Somehow the need for attention as a wanted and loveable child did not develop properly.

“I had an incident that reflects impulsiveness, rare for me. I had one of Betty’s kids’ popguns. I put one of Bob’s still smoldering cigar butts on a cardboard box. I set the box on fire and it started to spread in the dead grass toward homes. I knew it was dangerous and I was excited to try it, but then regretted it. I used the popgun butt to fight it, and I did stop it, but I was ashamed and knew I was in trouble. That was a day I went too far. Fire excited me and I was good at fire starting in Scouts.

“I started first grade in fall of 1951, at Riverview School, at age 6. I did not go to Kindergarten. Reflecting back, I should have attended Kindergarten, for school in the academic classes were hard on me. I tended to let them slide and focus more on art or simple courses.”

MOM

Rader formed an ambivalent relationship with his mother. He loved her but “sometimes I thought she was a traitor.

“I wonder if I spent too much time with my grandparents, or perhaps with Mom’s friends at an early age. I wasn’t close to her. I knew that during the long winter of 1949–1950 [when he stayed on his grandparents’ farm], I missed her. I think she could cube [compartmentalize] as well as me, but on the good side. Maybe she sought the edge, too. She enjoyed the same kinds of books, scary ones, like monsters and thrillers. We would go to the movies. I recall one, *Fate is the Hunter* [a 1964 movie about a man searching for the true cause of a plane crash]. I was an adolescent, but I felt proud to be with her, an older woman.”

Rader recalls several traumatic moments associated with her. He believes the first occurred when he was about three or four.

“One day, either my Mom was testing me to see what I would do or she actually got her hand caught in the sofa. She asked me to go run for help next door to her mother’s. Her wedding band was caught on the spring, I think, and she was crying in panic. I was scared yet excited. I stared at her. I had a strange feeling in the pit of my stomach and the groin area. I ran next door to grandma’s house for help. I often wonder if the early emotions of this triggered some inner dark feeling about a woman in bondage needing help. The sofas replayed in my mind many times, not Mom, but women in bondage on them. I had the same feeling with Mom at the top of

a Ferris wheel. It was like just before the first time I had the Big G [first orgasm].

“One traumatic event I won’t forget was at the duplex on Central and Madison, where we first moved in Wichita. I was about 5. North of us, I had a friend and one day I found a toy tractor that was on the sidewalk, not on his property. It was a friend’s. We had played with it once. When I took it home, my Mom scolded me for stealing it. She was really upset with me. She wouldn’t listen. I said, ‘No, it was not on his property. I don’t know whose it is.’ She made me return it, anyway. I was crying and ashamed. I returned it. I never forgot that moment and I wonder if I held that against my Mom, because she didn’t come along and try to explain it to the others that I meant not to steal, only to borrow it. She made me feel like a thief. I felt so lonely and upset. This was probably the beginning of my impulse problem. Action before thought of consequences. Later, I took things and kept them secret.

“Then, later, as kids, we got in trouble for putting small pieces of metal on the rails to be flattened by the trains. A railroad detective really scared us when he came around and talked to our parents. Mom later told on us to my grandparents. That really hurt my relationship with her. It was humiliating and I couldn’t trust her. She embarrassed me.”

She also humiliated him when he had his first sexual emission. He would write about it later in his “BTK Story,” partially fictionalized for the police, but containing elements of truth: “10–11 years old: if you masturbate god will come and kill you. Mom words after she found seminal yellow stain in underwear one day. She tried to beat me. I fought back. She held my hands behind my back and used the man’s belt to whip me. Funny it hurt but Sparky [nickname for his penis] liked it. Mom finally quit and said, ‘Oh my God, what have I done?’ She kiss me. I was close to her, tears and moisture upon her and my cheeks. I could feel her heart beating and smell those wonderful motherly aromas.”

In this narrative we see the typical bondage/dominance (B/D) scenarios that Rader was reading about: harshness mixed with mercy, abuse with love. “Mom would use a belt or switch on us, chasing us down. It hurt and I didn’t like being spanked, like I said in the story, but I liked the chase. We thought it was a game. It hurt but it was exciting. So, in the story I wrote, sex and spanking go together.

“She also had a white slip that she kept hidden, but I found one day. So, I grew more curious about sex. I always loved satin. I touched it all the time on my baby blankets. When I found the slip, I had a great urge to masturbate into it. If they found it, it would mean instant suicide for me. I put it away, unharmed, and found some of Mom’s old panties. I used them and threw them away. It was probably the reason why I took women’s clothes and why I liked to look, feel and take things from people’s closets. I fantasized about dark-haired women, like Mom, in a white slip, bound. In one of Glatman’s photos, the woman in bondage is wearing a white slip. So, in a way, Mom became a fantasy sex symbol to me, although she never was a fantasy victim. We batted heads at times, but I loved her dearly.

“Her weakness was the ‘Tin Men.’ They were the salesmen who came with their wares. She would invite them in as they made their pitch (a ruse I might have picked up—I saw them talk their way in and persuade her).”

Similarly, Rader has strong memories of how he enjoyed his grandmother’s long hair and hair ribbons. “Of things I recall in Grandma Cook’s bedroom, her hair brush, her long unbraided hair, her ribbons to tie her hair. You really never saw her much in unbraided hair, only very early, or if she washed it and drying it. For some strange reason, I recall being in bed with her and playing with her hair as a child. Also loved to feel and touch satin on the blanket or ribbon at an early age. Grandma did at times wear ribbons in her hair. I liked to run them over my mouth.

“Mom was very compassionate. She would hold me during my earaches, apply warm heating pads, and she held me as I cried over my first lost girlfriend.”

A painful experience during childhood became a source of both comfort and anger. “I had terrible earaches, and had to have my eardrum punctured to relieve the pressure. I recall the terrible hurt and pain. A [female] doctor came to the house and tried to help, and I remember her closeness and care, but I remember the pain most of all. I had to be 5 or 6 years old, maybe 7. I think my mom had to hold me tight as the doctor worked on my ears. Then they applied warm oil. We might think of this as early BDSM: I was held down to experience pain and then comfort. This could be a key to my start. Something to explore.” [This doctor would later become the target of stalking, named PJ Doc.]

BROTHERS

“All my brothers seem to follow in my footsteps. Early years it was all Cowboys and Indians. I was Roy Rogers, Paul was Gene Autry, and Billy some other cowboy or sidekick. Jeff [the youngest] didn’t enter into our early years. I had Roy Rogers guns and my stick horse was Trigger. I *was* Roy Rogers. We made manes and tails for our horses and had a stable for them on the farm. They seemed like live horses. We’d watch westerns after school and play them out.

“None of us picked on each other. We did fight at times, but not the ‘fist and drag out’ type affair. More of a teasing, especially if the folks weren’t around or if one of us would invade the other’s forts or gang territory. I recall one time I did lose my temper and throttled Paul. He was scared. I backed off. I was scared as well. After that incident, he never pushed or teased me beyond the breaking point. He never mentioned it to the folks.

“I think I tried real hard to be a good leader for my brothers. This could be why my fantasy dreams came about. I became the superior one in my dreams and my mind. This could be the reason I fantasize about women weaker in the male and female world of strength, and perhaps ‘Street Smarts.’

“We had a competition, based on the World’s Largest Ball of String. [Frank Stoeber started this in 1953. In just four years the ball of twine weighed five thousand pounds and stood eight feet high. He gave it to Cawker City, Kansas, in 1961.] During the 1950s, in Columbus, off Main Street or that area, at a Texaco gas station, the owner’s hobby was collecting string. He added to a giant ball outside on display. It was the world’s biggest ball of string. This inspired me and my brothers to do the same.

“We started during one summer vacation at the Cook’s Farm. Each of us seeking string, cord, old shoe string, day by day, week by week, they grew. We had a bet about who could make the largest ball. One of the places for string was the barn, from the feed sack and binder twines. We proudly took them home to Wichita, and brought them back the next summer, and kept adding. I became obsessed with collecting string. I won and kept the ball for many years. The feeling of tying up loose ends with the string felt very good to me.

“I learned early to climb trees. As I grew older and bolder, the higher I’d climb. My favorite, and my personal tree was southwest of the house, a Chinese Elm. It had favorite limbs to climb on, special places for me to view the neighborhood and escape my brothers. Close to the top, after Dad trimmed it down some, I nailed a seat. I even sawed off [a] limb and had a place to hide my writing notes. This was my first Hidey Hole.”

Ironically, it was Rader’s youngest brother who seemed to be the family’s black sheep. Jeff got into trouble and was sometimes aggressive. “Brother #4 tortured the family’s pet dog. He placed it in the dryer once, without heat. It couldn’t walk properly for weeks! He had a mean streak in him that he could not hide, and he caused family problems.”

EROTIC ATTACHMENTS

As he grew older, Rader began to enjoy getting away from home and being a “lone wolf.” During these times, he imagined scenarios that excited him, especially as he experienced puberty. Some fantasies arose from his early experiences on the farm.

“Cooks’ barn was a faded red color. It was built around a red railroad car, a boxcar. For some strange reason, I felt drawn to this car, the wooden, metal, and storage bins, old feed sack with string, old leather that Grandpa used, his work bench, tin cans of screw and nails. It was as though the R/R car controlled me. (I once burned a mouse in this boxcar.) I have fond memories of barns, silos and cisterns. At night, the barn was a forlorn, mysterious building. I never entered at night when I was young unless someone was with me.

“Whenever I would enter the silo, I felt a tightness in the groin area, or neck hair feeling, particularly as I would climb the silo ladder, the prohibited ladder. Grandpa Cook warned us not to climb it. I felt like it was the cookie jar: look, but don’t eat. We boys used the silo like a jail or fort. Once captured there, maybe we’d be tied. I enjoyed the feeling of being tied up. The kids were playing Cowboys and Indians, the prisoner loaded up in the silo. They played rough at times. Strange feeling, to be hog-tied and at the bottom of the pit, so helpless. The call [for help] only moved upwards, no one to see your plight. I was scared but something felt good.”

Rader found the condition of being bound and helpless, either as participant or observer, strangely thrilling. “Anytime a chicken was tied up and ready to be axed, something inside me, I had a tightness in the groin area. That is probably the X factor. Death is only seconds away. They are helpless. Sometimes bound around legs and hanged, then head put into a wooden rack. When it was cut off, they run around, and blood flying everywhere. The one who holds power over life and death is in charge. It must be the control thing, where the object is bound and has no control. It struggles. The spider has the fly in his web!”

He did not like cats. “Grandma Cook had a lot of barn cats. She, like my Mom, loved animals. Most of them were wild, but Grandma always kept a kettle of mush for them in the kitchen, and leftover cow’s milk. To me, cats are mysterious creatures, their slanted eyes, claws, razor sharp teeth, sleek, quick, stealth in movement, a sort of feminine creature, and they haunted the boxcar in the barn. I never really cared for them. I didn’t understand them and felt I needed to control them. I designed a box to lure them. They became early S/M victims. I felt compelled to catch one, get that mysterious creature in my control, and kill it. You couldn’t tie up a cat with baling wire, although I tried. They would go crazy on you. I needed a gunnysack. Hanging them quickly was the way to get them. (I also hanged rabbits we raised for food before slaughtering them.)

“Could the cats be [the] early connection to hunt women? They have many of the cat’s features, feminine slanted eyes, long fingernails, perfect teeth, luring smile-lips, hair, smooth movement, trim and independent beyond the male. If I see a picture of a cat’s eye, I get a strange feeling, as though the cat has supernatural powers and they can be controlled by me.

“Now I have said [to the police in 2005] that I tortured and killed dogs. No. I said that for an impression. I loved dogs. I have tied them up for bondage gratification, including some of family early pets at times, but never tortured them. I always felt bonded to dogs, and treasured many years of good friendships. It’s only a jump from a dog to a wolf, the closest living thing to them. I relate to wolves. I was a lone wolf at times.”

Then there were the death stories. “Grandma Cook subscribed to *Redbook Magazine*. When I was 12 or 13, I remember a story about a young man killing his girlfriend. I believe he strangled her. When I heard it, I was sexually aroused. As I read it, I felt uncomfortable yet I had a strong need to know. I had already started mild bondage. This was the first sex

story, or the way I perceived it. He killed her by stuffing leaves down her throat and strangled her. I recall that magazine even today. *Redbook* had some racy articles. That may be why I started later seeking out crime thrillers and true detective type magazines. I liked the ones with a ‘girl in trouble’ on the cover.”

MONSTERS AND MOVIES

There’s nothing like a monster movie for depicting females in trouble. Rader was already alert to monsters at a young age, and scared of them. “I first saw monsters at 3 or 4. Mom had an upstairs bedroom at her folk’s house, the one on Elm Street. I recall the layout, and remember sleeping or being up there. It had a figure of a statue, brown color, like *The Thinker*. Maybe it was a Greek man-God, in a vase form. But I didn’t like it and this was the start of monsters that haunted my thoughts.

“Later I could see them in wallpaper, rugs, wood grains, clouds, shadows, patches of flowers, forest-trees, and creepy looking barns. For some strange reason, I’d feel a tightness in my crotch. Perhaps me in shadow of a forest, out to get you, your feet, stuck in glue, you’re helpless, he’s closing in!

“Several monster movies stand out as having an effect on me: *The House of Wax*, *The Wolf Man*, *The Invisible Man*, and *The Mummy*.”

For readers unacquainted with these plots, I provide the following descriptions.

In *House of Wax* (1953), wax sculptor Henry (Vincent Price) is horrified to learn that his business partner, Matthew (Roy Roberts), plans on torching their wax museum to collect on the insurance policy. Henry miraculously survives a fiery confrontation with Matthew, although he’s badly burned, and he re-emerges years later with his own museum. But as he’s adding to his collection, corpses are vanishing from the city morgue, and it’s clear what’s up. The female art student who tries to stop him puts herself in danger. Just as she proves that Henry has encased her murdered friend in wax, Henry captures her and locks her, naked, into the box in which he will pour the hot wax. As she struggles, bound hand and foot in metal clamps, this brunette’s helpless terror might have mirrored what Rader saw on his mother’s face when she was trapped.

The Mummy, a 1932 horror film, starred Boris Karloff as a mummified Egyptian priest, Imhotep. He had been mummified alive as punishment for trying to resurrect his forbidden lover, the princess Ankh-es-en-Amon. When an archaeologist reads a scroll, he revives Imhotep, whereupon the mummy sees a woman he thinks is the princess and attempts to kill her so he can mummify and resurrect her. The scene of live burial thrilled and terrified Rader.

The Invisible Man (1933) stars Claude Rains as Dr. Jack Griffin, a chemist who has discovered a drug that will make him invisible. Mentally unstable, he grows increasingly more grandiose and becomes a killer, wreaking havoc until he is finally shot.

The Wolf Man was a 1941 movie starring Lon Chaney, Jr. It inspired the plots of many other werewolf movies during the 1950s. After a wolf attack, a man transforms at times into a savage wolf. He's completely helpless to the infection that drives him.

"The werewolf stalked victims," said Rader, "his face, a true monster, and the moon, the mystical creature. There was some sexually excitement in that, [in] the chase, the hunt.

"Due to bondage, *The Mummy* and that type, of the person going to his grave, bound and helpless, perhaps buried alive, really turned me on. I recall in the eighth grade, being bored in classroom, drawing females wrapped tightly in Mummy wraps. I had to hover over my sketches to hide them. This was the start of my early sketches. I saved them and hid them in my Hidey Holes. They were my secret.

"The Invisible man, because he was an invisible Minotaur, had three characteristics that relate to BTK: Super stealth (I was invisible for thirty years off the police radar); wrapped like the mummy to present himself to the human eye; and a real boogeyman like Vincent Price in *The House of Wax*. One scene that I had sexual fantasies about was when he tied a woman up in a car and rolled her over a cliff. She was bound and helpless.

"In the mid 50s, 3-D was big. When I was 8, my mom and Aunt Katherine took me to see *The House of Wax* in 3-D at the theater in Pittsburg, Kansas. It had a profound effect on me. Coming back to my grandparents' farm, sleeping with windows open, I saw shadows in the yard and heard the noise of the Coyotes. I had nightmares and saw monsters all night long. I was afraid they would come and make me into a wax figure. But the image

that stands out is the girl in the wax tub, helpless. This may have sealed my doom. She was another ‘Little Nellie’ [from *Dudley Do-Right*].

“Also, somewhere between 8 and 10, certain things on the radio, monster music, or terror themes, dramatic music, then the person trapped, or being tied up, made my groin tighten. Then magazines or books increased that feeling, many times make a ‘hard on.’ Tarzan movies, Westerns, Cowboys and Indians, where people were tied up, and as we play these games. [He liked how Tarzan commanded his world with a ropelike vine.]

“I do believe in a world between death and the everlasting—a mysterious, secret, puzzling world of ghosts, fairies, changelings, and demons. Of those, I often wonder, if I became a ‘changeling,’ a child secretly exchanged for another, one that one day would walk a Dark Path.”

DEVELOPMENTAL DIFFICULTIES

“My mom fell off a horse when she was pregnant with me. She told me she had dropped me on my head when I was 6 to 8 months old. I turned blue, but not taken to the hospital. The right side of head hit hard; that may have scramble the network.”

Rader has pondered the stereotypical “flags” of the developing serial killer, the so-called Macdonald triad of bed-wetting past age five, fire-starting, and animal cruelty. Yet there is little research support for this association, which dates back to 1963. Forensic psychiatrist J. M. Macdonald observed in a paper, “The Threat to Kill,” that these behaviors (along with two others) often showed up in his most aggressive and sadistic patients. He had compared 48 psychotic patients against 52 non-psychotic patients who had threatened to kill. He did not believe the study offered predictive value, and his research group was small and unrepresentative. Still, other researchers decided that Macdonald’s notion was worth testing.

A team of psychiatrists divided 84 incarcerated offenders into two groups: nonaggressive (53) and aggressively violent (31). They claimed that three-fourths of the violent offenders showed evidence of one or two prongs of the triad, and that 45 percent showed all three. Their study, too, was small and poorly designed. When others tried to replicate it with randomized groups, no one’s results came close. Nevertheless, some

criminologists have applied the triad to various offender populations, including serial killers, and media depictions have oversimplified the supposed causal connection. While some violent offenders do have excessive fire-setting, animal cruelty, or bedwetting past age five in their backgrounds, in no well-designed study have all three emerged in the majority of cases. Rader manifested just one of the three, animal cruelty.

“I started the first grade in 1951, at a big old white wooden structure, where eight grades attended. My class was led by Ms. Sullivan. I had a crush on her. She was attractive, a very good teacher and understanding with us kids. I recall she spent extra time with me, as I was a slow learner. Dad was also poor in spelling and higher math, but did have an interest in history and sports. Since he had to work two jobs, he could spend little time to help us, but he was more interested in our grades than Mom was.

“In second grade, I was slow and had problems on big words. Still today, I have to use a dictionary a lot for spelling. At the time, the school system was teaching sight words, not phonics, and it certainly hurt me. I wish my parents would have spent more time with me on reading, although the slowness reflected in my school work, setting the stage for becoming a C+ student. I did well in art, but was poor in English, math, and some sciences. (Yet today I love to study words, write, and do math.) To me, play time, or fantasy time, was more important than homework. If any homework, it was always put off to the last minute.

“I was very shy as a child, until I was at least 20. My mom was shy, too, I believe. She did not like large crowds or being the center of attention. Dad was more social and outgoing. I certainly had stage fright and dreaded being in the front of a crowd. In 1954, as the technology theme hit, I wrote a third-prize story titled, ‘The Mad Scientist.’ Something along the lines of the super bomb, neutron, etc., that wouldn’t destroy everything, only the bad people. The problem was that I had to read it in front of the class. This was difficult for me. I often wonder if that slowness, shyness, and being awkward later lead to a dark side or a hang up.

“I don’t know my IQ. I mastered math up to calculus in high school, but only after many repeats of math classes. Word problem are hard for me. I was the ‘world’s worst speller.’ Yet I feel I’m fairly smart and certainly have good common sense, and self-control.

“I was awkward around girls in grade school. At parties, I was a wallflower. Back on Central and Madison, I had my first girlfriend. Then in

second and third grade, 'TB' was the next. I used to walk her home and carry her books. She let me play with the dogs, she baked cookies for me, but was more of a tomboy. She was sort of plain looking, but I really liked her. When her family moved, my heart was broken.

"I also met girls at 4-H, church, and youth group meetings. One girl, 'SB,' oh, I really loved her. Puppy love at an early age, my early teen years. She was the daughter of the church's pastor. I had 'in house' dates with her, during the evenings. In their rec room downstairs, we played games, cards, and watched TV. Every chance I had, I tried to get her alone. We exchanged gifts at Christmas, birthdays, special occasions. [As an adult] I still had a charm she gave me. I used to keep a diary, and would write about the time with her. The day they move to another church in the Kansas City area, I broke down and cried. It seemed like I kept losing the girls I wanted.

"If I recall, sex-education started about grades 6–8, and even at Church we had it, so maybe 1959–61, in that range. Society seemed to rethink education at that period of time. We did watch early films at grade school, but they really didn't get down to basic birds-and-bees. My Dad waited too late to tell me, and didn't go into details at all. He said, 'Never lay down on a couch with a little girl.' Mom never discussed it at all. So, I was very bashful. I didn't understand things about females until my early teens. Most of my early girlfriends were tomboys except my puppy love at Zion Lutheran.

"I recall sugar lows at early teens. I always keep a cookie or peanut butter handy. Low glucose and glycogen cause future recidivism into violent behavior. The brain needs 80 milligrams of glucose a minute to function efficiently. Once down, there are symptoms of nervousness and irritability. I have both in low sugar times, to a point I can't think straight. Although not feeling angry, I feel critical of things around me or out of focus, especially physical things."

Rader attended Wichita Heights High School from 1959 to 1963. He also had a part-time job. "After I started work, my grades slipped. Again English, math, heavy courses I struggled with, but I was busy now, making money. Like most boys, I wanted to look nice and save for a car, so a job was more important than school."

He was seventeen when he sustained a potentially serious head injury. "In 1962, Zion Lutheran was having a pre-Christmas party for the youth league. We traveled from home to home, eating our progressive dinner,

eating one main item, then driving to the next house for another food item. Part of the fun was racing the car to the next house. That's where I ran into trouble. It was a foggy night, mid-December. I knew a short cut to save time and be the first there, ironically, on Hydraulic Street (a street that symbolizes power and pressure—a street I had many things occur on, several victims lived on it and girls I dated). I was traveling too fast for the conditions and I ran directly into a ditch where the road made a curve. I had no time to react. 'Bang!' I hit the windshield, broke it, and it cut me deeply on my left hand, although I was wearing gloves. It cut right through across the knuckle. Worse was a deep cut to the right side of my face in the corner of my right eye. I saw blood everywhere as I came out of a daze. My passenger lay moaning. He had hit the passenger side corner post, near the spot I had hit.

"The other Church traveling party soon found us. They wanted to take us to the hospital right away, but I insisted they take me home. They finally agreed. I was embarrassed, so I lied and told them that someone had run us off the road, it was not my fault.

"It was a shock to my parent as I enter the house, bleeding and crying. They immediately took me and my friend to the St. Francis Hospital. I liked the attention. They called my friend's folk, who met us there. My friend had a mild concussion and they kept him overnight. They sewed me up and I was released. Before leaving I ask to see my friend to check on him, but also to get our story straight on what happen, that another vehicle had run us off the road. I'm not sure if he remembered or even cared.

"I was sore the next day and rested in bed, missed a day or two of school, very self aware of my face wound. I remember the first day back, my math teacher joked, asking if one of these farm girls had beat me up. Later on I confess to the insurance man I had been going too fast for the foggy night. Over all, I was terribly upset with crashing the family car, and it took me a long time to get up my nerve to drive again.

"This wreck was the start of a Dark Spin."

BONDAGE

"Being tied up triggered a sexual feeling early in life. As we played Cowboy and Indians, we used ropes a lot on our pretend horses, or tied

‘Indians’ up. By sixth grade, I was fantasizing bondage, and by eighth grade, I was drawing bondage picture big time and doing self-bondage.”

During the 1950s, theaters often showed black-and-white melodramas. When Rader was in high school, a dim-witted cartoon Canadian Mountie named Dudley Do-Right starred in a TV parody of these melodramas, appearing on the *Rocky and Bullwinkle Show*. Do-Right is always trying to catch his nemesis, Snidely Whiplash, who has a habit of tying the redheaded heroine, Nell, to the railroad track. Do-Right always rescues her as the train approaches. Rader loved both the “White Hat” rescue and the thought of the bound female about to die. As his shyness prevented him from approaching the popular and cute girls, he found a way in his fantasies to possess them and also to punish them. He could decide whether he would be Snidely or Dudley. He could make a girl die or he could rescue her. Either way, he won.

Rader views this fantasy as a split in himself (“cubing”) between the White Hat and the Black Hat. “During my Cowboy/Indian years, I would save the girl from the bad guy. I watched Dudley Do-Right, a mellow fellow who rescued women from evildoers. The tying or controlling of [a] person onto a track was sexually exciting, but saving the person was a thrill also.”

Bondage became an early secret and laid the foundation for his fantasies. As often as he could he would go somewhere—usually in the barn, basement, or bathroom—to bind himself at the midsection. He would make it tighter and tighter to achieve the “high” feeling he derived from the asphyxiation. He believed it was “wrong,” but he could not stop.

“As [a] kid, if I tied my female cousin up after she was captured, the excitement increased. Sometimes, putting them in a pretend jail, prison, box, or wrapped in a blanket sparked the excitement. Slowly this developed, and in the fall or late summer, at the age of 10 or 11, maybe 12, I started window-peeping. First, I peeped on my tomboy girlfriend that lived across the street. Then on female cousins and then my neighbors’ houses.

“I started wandering more often as I approached age 11–12. I bought a telescope in the late 50s and begun searching the neighborhood from my distant tree spot or [I would] hide in the grass or wooded area and just watch people. The braver I became, the bolder, with more peeping. One night, I slipped out of the house, and even started to remove screens from

my next-door neighbor's back door. I could hear them sleeping, a summer night, their windows open. I was becoming a prowler.

"In the 4th grade, I had a problem with the school or teacher over the milk program. We were required to drink white milk every morning or at lunchtime. It was usually cool, but the only way I liked milk was very cold, or if it had chocolate or vanilla and sugar in it. Many days, I refused to drink it, and thus lost recess or other privileges. This was the start of my drawing of 'Black-Board Horror Places' and girl traps. As the kids played outside, I was left alone, or was with my close friend Bobby.

"I recall reading about 'Bluebeard' [H. H. Holmes] at an early age. It seems I recall drawing some of White City back in 5th grade, while the rest of the kids played outside. I and Bobby would draw castles of doom. We both loved monster movies and scary stuff. Our fantasies ran wild, with a whole blackboard to design on. In my secret dungeon, I had a DTPG room, Death to Pretty Girls. The dungeon was like a barn, with wooden beams, chains, and things a barn would have. I think this was the start of terror and domination on females, fueled by hurt and dislike of fourth and fifth grade teachers, and sexually feeling about my sixth grade teacher.

"I did not get along with [my] 5th grade teacher, Ms. S. She was sort of mean, very strict, and if we couldn't do math or something on the blackboard she would embarrass us in front of the class. I learned to dislike her, and I developed a sexual fantasy of her in bondage.

"So, it was either just before or right after we started 6th grade, watching the backyard of my [former] teacher, perhaps on a sunny weekend, hoping to spy on her, I for some reason took ropes with me. My fantasy had started. I was going to tie her up. But, in the tree row, hidden, I tied myself up, and the tighter I did so, the more excited I become. Then I suddenly had my first male release. I had not fondled myself, but it happened. I got a stain in my boxers that I could not remove. Mom saw it [later in the laundry] and told Dad. That sort of thing was not allowed for good Christian boys. He told me it wasn't right. I was embarrassed again! Henceforth, ropes and sexual activity on myself became my *secret* way of release. We had an old bed in the basement, and I would sneak down there and tie myself up and release into old clothes and tissues."

It was this experience that later became part of a fictional story for his cat-and-mouse game with the police. Once more, he also saw his mother as the person who had deeply humiliated him.

“By seventh grade, I had fantasies about tying popular girls onto the railroad tracks. I also did bondage of them and had a mock-up track in my ‘House of Horrors’ for victims.

“I worked in a welding shop from age 13 to 16 (strong years of 3). I had bad fantasies about the daughters of the welding shop owner, or what I call deranged Puppy Love. The older daughter ‘JL,’ was a junior at Valley Center [High School]. She would pick me up from school and drop me off at home. I would eat a quick snack and ride my bike or walk to their place. ‘JL’ drove me crazy, a tomboy that had outgrown bobby socks. She wore a tight skirt, nylons, and a white slip. I was an employee, a freshman in high school, and way out of her class. Mrs. L. also drove me crazy. In the summer, she wore a tube top. She was tan and nice looking. My thoughts were probably like any normal male, a ‘cookie jar’—look, but don’t take. Yet it had warm chocolate chip cookies inside!

“I really needed a good teacher of sex, I believe, or a girlfriend. I didn’t date; I was too busy. I started working for Leeker’s as a carryout and ‘pop bottle boy,’ sorting the deposit bottles as people brought them in, day after day. If a sharp looking female came in, the boys had a code, and each of us would visit an aisle, pretending to be busy, and check this female out.

“I played a lot at the river after growing older. There was a bridge that crossed the river going to Dad’s plant. It was a part-vehicle, part-railroad track bridge. At times alone, in the dark or at dusk, I [would] bind myself and partially hang myself under it. Under the pretense of fishing nearby, I had a ruse in case someone stopped by. I can still smell the wood, too, and feel the heat from the tracks today.

“One incident probably happened in 1957–1958. There was an abandoned farm northwest of our home, near the river. It had a barn and silo. One day, one of the ‘toughies’ [rough kids] and his gang tied me and my friends up and left us in the silo. They climbed the ladder, teasing us, throwing clods or small rocks at us. The toughie leader’s folks owned the farm and they were warning us to stay away. But being tied up and threatened like this aroused me. The deep silo wall, sort of a prison, enchants the incident. I was helpless but it was sexually exciting. Later the excitement of sneaking on to that farm was a rush to me.

“From collecting string, I learned to tie knots, early ones from fishing days, later from [being a Boy] Scout. I learned my favorite, the clove hitch, as well as the double half hitch, the square knot and the bowline knot. As

the bondage theme grew, string turned to cord, ropes, straps, leather belts, tape, chains, devices and plastic. The hangman's noose excited me later on, perhaps from the Westerns or the criminals or toughies. I did use it on small animals at times to heighten my sexually feelings, mainly in my early teen years, or preteen. Later I used the noose to do self-erotica [asphyxiation], to the point of almost passing out. I would wrap my neck in a sheet or towel to prevent red marks and rope burns on my neck, and always had a way to get out of bondage with hands, pulling tightly up, my feet or toes barely on the floor; or I step off a step, with sexually release very fast.

"At our house at 4815 North Seneca, the chicken house became a fort for us kids, and a club house. It was in this chicken house that I had a strong sexual experience. Being of teenage years, I would spend time in my father's Ford, pretending to drive. Thus, one day I found a magazine. It was his. Inside was an article on Harvey Glatman, and bondage pictures of his victims."

Rader had likely spotted the February 1959 issue of *Front Page Detective* magazine under the front seat of the family car. "It belonged to my father." He grabbed it. The cover photo showed a terrified woman, firmly bound and gagged. The feature story was "The Sex-Crazed Photographer and His Graveyard of Models."

"This was exactly the pictures and theme that I dreamed about. The old chicken house was near. I had ropes and hooks stashed away there, and some of Mom's feminine clothing. I secured a blanket. I read the article and masturbated into the clothes I had hid.

"The women in the photos knew they were going to die. Glatman liked to bind their bare legs over the knees and their hands behind them. He even placed a gag twisted into a rope over their mouths. One woman, wearing just a slinky white slip, lay on a blanket, bound at the ankles, knees, and hands, with a rope going around her across her midriff.

"The lady in the white slip in the desert, that triggered me off. Slips turn me on sexually. They are soft satin, and like the early ribbons I used to stroke in my Grandma's, Aunt's, or Mom's hair, it was the type of material I found in a special place in my Mom's bedroom, I assume for her and Dad. Glatman as a child also play or carry around string and rope and did self-gratification."

The article covered Glatman's pathetic life. After serving time in prison for assault and a few petty crimes, Glatman took up photography.

When he met a model, Judy Ann Dull, he got an idea: if he told her he needed photos for a true crime magazine that required her to be tied up, he could do whatever he wanted with her and then just kill her. Glatman tried it. Eager to land the gig, Dull came to his apartment and even agreed to be bound and gagged. Glatman kept up the pretense as he snapped some pictures, but then he reached for a gun. He put it to her head and watched her eyes widen as she realized that this was no photography session and she was completely helpless. Then he raped her.

After getting Dull into his car, still alive and struggling, Glatman headed toward the desert, east of Los Angeles. The entire way there, she had to ponder the death that Glatman assured her lay in store. It made her breathe hard and struggle, which excited him (and Rader). For several hours, he wallowed in his control over her. Finally, it was time. In an isolated spot, Glatman laid Dull on a blanket, posed her, and took photos before he killed her and buried her in a shallow grave. He kept the photos so he could savor those moments again and again. However, the thrill wore off, so he decided to repeat the experience.

Glatman used the same ruse for a second victim and found his third through a “lonely hearts” ad. Both were easily led to the slaughter. He bound, photographed, raped, and killed them before leaving their bodies in the desert. However, his fourth intended victim, Lorraine Vigil, who was not fully bound, managed to disarm him while they were on the road. She attracted the attention of a passing patrol officer, who arrested Glatman. He was tried, convicted, and summarily executed. Ironically, Glatman’s photos of the bound women, their wide eyes expressing helpless panic, did end up in a detective magazine—the one that Rader was reading.

He devoured the purloined magazine, cover to cover. Then he returned to the photos. He felt the petrified stare of the doomed victims as if he’d bound them himself, especially the one wearing only a slip. He later reported that it was the greatest sexual rush he had ever achieved.

“The rope was the key,” he says. “I put the magazine back where I found it, but it had a profound effect. The image of the woman staring, terrified, knowing death was coming, was frozen for me. It was part of my SF the rest of my life. The best gratification.” He looked for more detective magazines, because they tended to “string up the girls, and tie them up.” This became his primary erotic image. “The Glatman photos became frozen

in my mind.” Into adulthood, his most intense arousal would depend on that expression of doomed terror.

“The *Action Men* magazine in the barber shop became popular for me to read. I recall that *Stag* was popular, and I never really bought any, but at the drugstore at the corner of 53rd Street North and Seneca, I would buy *Popular Science* or *Popular Mechanic*, and while thumbing through them, I would sneak a look at the recent *Stags* or detective magazines. Most had women in distress on the cover, a big Cookie Jar for me. I couldn’t get enough of them.

“In our closet was access to our attic, a simple cover to lift. This became my first Hidey Hole for bondage or slick ad material. Once Dad redid the electrical wiring in our home and installed the TV antenna and insulation, he never ventured to the attic again. It became my first ‘Horror Chamber.’”

BREAKING BAD

As previously mentioned, Rader was riding in a car on November 15, 1959, when the radio announced the murder of a family of four in Holcomb, west of Wichita. He was fourteen years old and with a girl on whom he “had a painful crush.” Rader was enthralled, especially as he heard about the details of the murder, about how Herb Clutter, his wife, son, and daughter had been *bound with rope* before being killed. He got so excited that he could hardly stand it—and “imagined binding and killing her there in the car.”

Rader thinks the incident might have sparked his first decision to break into a building.

“It was 1959–1960 that I did my first Breaking and Entry, or BE. I do understand the feeling of criminals, of robbing or stealing. Breaking and entry has a thrill close to sex, [which is] the most exciting thrill of all!

“With [my] family asleep, I very carefully made a dummy-looking bedroll and stole into the night, walking quickly northward to the Riverview School. Somewhere in the late 1950s or early 60s, the school, like others, had started installing simple alarm system, to prevent BES. So, the idea was pre-conceived: wouldn’t it be thrilling to do a BE, seek out a female’s desk,

touch their things, and be a sort of a 'physical voyeur,' and maybe take a small, not-missed item?

"The Clutter incident could have fueled my thoughts, plus being a prowler. Like all males that age, girls were on my mind. I brought along some rope, tools, flashlight (it was taped over except a very small pinhole). I had a hunting knife, and always a good pocketknife. I think, I took some cheap brown cotton gloves, which later became part of my 'hit-kit.'

"I believe the alarm system had a P-E Beam in the hallway, so the skylight was the best way in. I removed the skylight, secured a rope to the base of metal on the roof, went down inside, and went to check the teacher's desk for the assignment. I found a girl's desk and rifled it. I don't believe I took anything, but I could have. I checked other desks, too, and I scribbled a line with my left hand on the blackboard. I can't recall the message, but perchance, it was the start of my cat-and-mouse game. I used the rope for support, pulled it out, replaced the skylight, took the rope back up, and left. It took an hour maybe, a total of two hours at the most. No one found out it was me. It was a prank but also my first project.

"As I grew bolder and more aggressive, on the days when people were all gone from a house, I would carefully enter and go through the girls' feminine things, touching them. Somewhere from deep in a drawer, I would take an old pair of panties, or nylons, that wouldn't be missed. Later in a secret place, I would perform self-gratification with them.

"The Dark Side took hold one summer night, I guess bottled up in me for too long. At the 81 Drive-in, they were running a controversial movie about a black man raping a white woman, or having sex with her. The audience was asked to answer certain questions with a survey on the movie screen. The Cookie Jar was back on! I was too young to get in legally, and would have been embarrassed to be seen there, so with the ruse of going fishing, I did an overnighter on the banks of the Little Arkansas, just south of the bridge that crossed 53rd Street N. I set up my primary camp as dusk settled in, and then as it grew dark and the movie time started, I drove to the dike area along the Chisholm Creek east of the theater and west of Park City. I parked away from the main road and sneaked over to the 81. I climbed a tree and watched the movie. Sexually excited by it, I returned to the river, did bondage on myself with stakes, and half-buried in the sand. Because I had parked along the road, a policeman stopped and checked the car. He shined a light toward me, and I quickly covered up with a blanket,

and howled ‘I’m Okay!’ He said he was just checking, and left. That was a close call!

“West of the house was another sand pit, an old rundown sand pit temple. Part of the structure had a sort of cage, a metal screen that faced the south. This is where I dreamed of bringing Annette Funicello. I had a big crush on her when she was on *The Mickey Mouse Club*, and I now had little time to watch the program. But she had grown up in front of me, and suddenly like the girls of seventh and eighth grade, she was attractive, and sexually fantasies ran rapid in my mind. She became my slave girl in the ‘chicken house,’ or the ‘attic,’ and I focused on the bound mummy type theme. Annette became imprisoned in the sand pit, and I would pretend I was *her* and perform self-gratification acts in that cage, with the sun bearing down on me, tightly bound, at the mercy of the elements.”

Rader imagined Annette was a victim, and himself as Annette in the victim role, fusing the two and immersing himself in the bound victim experience. His resentment toward females, especially those who took power from him, flowed into a merged experience of being both powerful and helpless.

RADER’S SUMMARY

Upon looking over his childhood, Rader has ideas about the factors that played a strong role in his development into a lust killer.

“If we establish my maybe damaged brain from the drop as a baby, and my mom falling off a horse while pregnant with me, and perhaps her smoking with friends, her father’s pipe smoke, a WWII diet, and maybe a genetic piece, it’s the start of a bad cocktail!

“Mom’s hand caught in the sofa when I was very young is an early women-in-bondage or captive theme. And the barns that I loved to explore perhaps gave me memories of childhood days, their smell, the wood texture, the smell of leather, the hay, feed sacks, and animals. Later, the dark side of me became enthralled with barns and silos as my Dark Lair. Then, I recall sleeping at times in my grandmother’s bed as a child, playing with her hair, and ribbons. This made me like women’s garments. Later, for self-gratification, I used female slips and underwear, and blankets with satin trim.

“Part of it, too, was the trauma and embarrassment after the tractor incident, and feeling awkward and shy with girls. Then, there were early childhood memories of bound chickens, with their heads removed on the chopping block, and the axe and blood, and them flopping around after their heads were gone. Why would this become so strong in my memory? Was this again bondage or something being so helpless?

“I thought of pretty and popular girls bound and under my control. I imagined them tied on the tracks. But I also bound teachers I didn’t like.

“I don’t know what made me like this, but it continued.”

3 DARK EXPLORATIONS

There were times earlier in my life when someone should have said, “This guy needs help.”
Dennis Rader

Rader demonstrates the development of a paraphilia, a sexual disorder that generally begins in childhood or adolescence and persists into adulthood. Males report many more than females. These disorders become enduring patterns of behavior that focus for sexual arousal on objects (shoes, statues, dolls, underwear), unusual activities (bondage, stabbing), or deviant situations or experiences (choking, chasing, vomiting). They can become consuming and obsessive. Repetitive fantasies often develop, which generally become more detailed and stimulating as the person matures. The most common are listed in *The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*. Those that relate to Rader’s development include fetishism (sexual arousal from nonhuman objects) and deviant experiences.

“Most of my fantasies were about being in a dungeon. Dad had ropes, cord and twine hung in some corner in the basement. Did he have [the] same problem I had? He came from a strict religious family and was super-organized, like me. Everything had a purpose or place. I would imagine being tied to a railroad track, with a train coming.”

He describes his fantasies about binding victims and putting them in danger of impending death, to mirror the Glatman images. “My fantasy dungeon would be a silo next to a barn, with different levels of torture chambers. It would have wooden beams, like castles of old. The person would have straw or hay for a bed. At the top, would be a BTK den, a computer desk, a drawing board, and files. Now the question: would I have ever designed or built such a monstrous idea? If I were rich and younger, and a lone wolf, maybe. The fantasy farm was along highway 50, from Newton to Florence. Take a castle, Dutch windmill, saw mill and silo, and you have a BTK dungeon. In my ‘retirement,’ I was going to build my fantasy silo.

“From early in my teens, I also used our basement for auto-asphyxiation, by hanging myself to achieve climax.” In later years, Rader

would spend many hours building and using contraptions that enhanced sexual arousal and release. Shopping trips centered on finding new gadgets that he could repurpose for gratification. He had both masochistic and sadistic traits. He gained sexual pleasure from binding and hanging himself, even burying or tightly wrapping himself. He also enjoyed the idea of the extreme mental torture of others—sadism.

Researchers Lisa Shaffer and Julie Penn spell out what this entails. Most sadists begin as masochists, who are aroused by the infliction of pain or humiliation. They then move into a dominating role, because they have already thought in detail about the infliction of pain. Some even develop such a need for increasingly more intense arousal that they become rapists or murderers. The types of activities sadists enjoy include whipping people, hanging them, choking and reviving them, electrocuting them, cutting or burning them, and captivity. This predilection appears to form during certain associations in adolescence. Sadists enjoy the feeling of power and authority that arises from having their way with a vulnerable, submissive human being.

Rader wanted his victims to know that they were going to die. “I believe the mental part played the biggest part in the development of my desire to torture. It was more a fiction and fantasy.”

He also enjoyed cross-dressing in female clothing for his self-gratification experiences, a throwback to the erotic feelings he developed when he touched his mother’s and grandmother’s silky undergarments. “Could I be two people in one body, male and female?” He stole underwear from victims to keep the experience alive. Disliking how his shyness kept him off-balance with girls, he developed Death to Pretty Girl fantasies and made detailed drawings that involved elaborate torture devices. The victim’s anguished face was a central feature.

Paraphilias develop as the sexual instinct gets coupled with other experiences. Once set, they become the primary form of arousal and it becomes difficult to shift to more normal experiences. Bruce Arrigo and Catherine Purcell write that children who experience upsetting or frightening events might withdraw into fantasies and daydreams, which then shape their developmental process. They escape a reality in which their lack of control upsets them, and find a form of control in a world in which their needs are central. Dissociating from reality becomes increasingly easier, even preferable. Those fantasies that become violent, according to

criminologist Eric Hickey, are attempts to feel in control and raise self-esteem. Self-pity, loss of confidence, or an inability to accept criticism or rejection can all be triggers. Paraphilias develop from fantasies that feel good, and then reinforce them in a feedback loop.

There are hundreds of paraphilias. Rader's paraphilias, while shocking, are not extraordinary. More perverse paraphilias include an attraction to dead bodies or body parts, wanting insects to bite the genitals, craving to be trussed up and basted like a turkey, a desire to consume another person, and arousal from being smeared with waste products. Sylvestre Metuschka once engineered train wrecks because the fantasy of metal skewering flesh excited him. Charles Albright removed eyes, Joachim Kroll consumed parts of children, Robert Hansen hunted naked women he set loose in the Alaska woods, and several killers have styled themselves as werewolves. Vincenz Verzeni choked women during sex; if he reached orgasm before they died, he let them go. Jeffrey Dahmer and Dennis Nilsen both merged their sexual excitement over corpses with an intense need for company that murder temporarily alleviated. They kept body parts close. Ted Bundy sometimes removed and kept victims' heads, and Jerome Brudos cut off feet to take photos of them in purloined shoes.

Paraphilias are not chosen. They happen as experience and biology fuse. Paraphilias are not criminal unless they become coercive on non-consenting parties or the person abuses protected items (e.g., bodies). There comes a tipping point for some, where fantasy evolves into action. Many serial killers force victims to do things that will enact the fantasy and satisfy the need. Erotophonophilia—lust murder—is one of the most extreme forms of paraphilic behavior in which the offender is aroused by both the act and the fact of murder. When a sexual fantasy is attached to a psychological drive, the need to satisfy it becomes both complex and urgent, motivating compulsive and repetitive crimes.

Research on the causes of paraphilias remains largely undeveloped. "Right now, our society is more equipped to look at it as a moral problem than a medical or scientific problem," said psychiatrist Fred Berlin, director of the Sexual Behaviors Consultation Unit at Johns Hopkins University. Speaking with reporter Sarah Kaplan of the *Washington Post* in August 2015, he added, "There is a biological basis for these cravings. . . . We have a society that sometimes finds it difficult to deal with these issues of sex

and so on, and that has led to us having less support for the kinds of research that would actually be very helpful.”

Typically intelligent, lust killers develop a solitary existence (even if married) where fantasy plays a strong role. They usually plan the murder. Often, the energy they direct at a victim is infused with anger, which might be aimed at a primary caretaker. However, there is no single causal factor in the development of a lust killer.

Dr. Louis Schlesinger, a psychologist and expert on sexual lust murders, states that attempts to predict the development of lust killers are complicated. There are no clear threats, they are not psychotic, and they might not show violent tendencies. Yet in the background of many, Schlesinger has noted specific red flags. Abuse or serious neglect during childhood tops the list, followed by sexually inappropriate conduct by the mother or female caretaker, and a strong tendency to lie and manipulate for no reason (aside from gamesmanship). The emergence of sadistic fantasies, usually in secret, may be revealed in therapy sessions or in drawings or writings. Then animal abuse or repetitive fire-setting might be evident, as well as the need to dominate other kids. There might also be indications of a developing paraphilia or ritual behavior, as well as voyeurism and sexual burglary. In addition, unprovoked attacks against girls indicate anger, and ritual behavior in other areas of life signals the need for control. These children show low levels of empathy, and they often grew up in chaotic or behaviorally inappropriate homes.

Of these ten items, we find at least half to be true for Rader. It is not difficult to trace how he developed an erotic attachment to the items that he identifies: women’s underclothing, ropes, binding, helplessness, and experiencing another person’s sense of impending death. When he was busy with ordinary activities (church, employment, friends, classes), his deviance receded, but certain images that were easily available in catalogs or men’s magazines could trigger these fantasies, especially if he were frustrated, depressed, or bored.

Many such fantasies provide rehearsal opportunities. A 1989 study that focused on serial killers found that, prior to each murder, 86 percent described having violent fantasies on a recurring basis. In many cases, a killer had seen someone at random and had begun to draw that person into his fantasies. With lust killers, the fantasies had specific erotic content. The scenarios fantasized became the frame for the act. What was envisioned

was what they wanted to do, and they had set the scenario in motion enough times mentally to smoothly accomplish it in reality.

“When I could drive,” says Rader, “I would sometimes visit a store or drugstore and thumb through men’s action or detective magazines. There was one store at 29th and Arkansas I liked to visit. Also, I found magazines in barbershops. And I enjoyed *Outdoor Life*, *Sports Afield*, and any of the ‘popular’ series. The barbershop magazine and tabloids were more exciting. When Marilyn Monroe died in 1962, I was spellbound by the news. In my sexually Dark Side mind, a blonde, bound and gagged woman became the spotlight. Annette Funicello moved to the background.

“My voyeurism continued with what I called slick ads. At first, they were from the Sears and Montgomery Wards catalogs—pictures of women in feminine apparel. As the catalogs were discarded, I tore out certain models to keep. Later, I made collections of them, or of certain apparel they would model. Some of them had that look or pose. I would trace them onto blank paper and then draw bondage items on them. I named them and collected certain ones for years.”

Sometimes he needed to see a flesh-and-blood victim so badly that he would pose in front of a window or mirror and draw bondage items on his reflection.

INDEPENDENCE

“I turned 18 in March 1963. This is a big step in a male’s life, especially thinking about women.”

Rader graduated from high school—barely. “At graduation, I remember thanking my high school teachers for passing me.

“In the summer of 1963, I bought my first car, a 1958 Ford, blue, six cylinder, two-door Sedan. I fixed it up with a dual exhaust system, dumps, a special carburetor, seat belts, a radio, dual speakers, an eight-track stereo system, and a stick shift. It cost me \$800.00. Late that summer, I had my first real date. The car became a social magnet machine, and I started to date daily. It was easier to carry on a conversation with the opposite sex. I even dated a divorced lady, about 10 year older than I. Sometimes I imagined my dates in bondage, but didn’t try it.

“I met a girl at John Davis’s back-to-school party, a swim meet, with a cookout. She was a friend of John’s and I had seen her once or twice at his house or at the Valley Center 4-H. I had wanted to date her, but I lacked the courage to ask. She left the party, driving her or her brother’s 1955 Chevy. I drove home feeling sick that I didn’t ask for a date. Then I turned around and drove fast and caught up. I followed her home. As she stopped and got out of her car, I asked for a date. She accepted.

“We went to a WSU Globe-Trotter game. We also double-dated with John and his girl friend, going to the 54 Drive-In to see *West Side Story*. I think she was looking for someone older, more mature. She grew distant and we drifted apart. I still remember her, I guess as my first real date. One time, the Beatles were playing “I Want to Hold Your Hand” on the radio, and we did that as I drove to town.

“The Dark Side was not big at that time. I was too busy at work, and dating may have helped. I took a sneak drive to Chicago and bought a 10-cent novel that featured a picture of girl being strangled.

“I also bought a nice stereo system, and was buying 45 RPM records all the time, with the hope of impressing a certain girl enough to go out with me, but she turn me down. I was confused because she was sweet to me. I was really upset over this rejection. I drove my car at reckless speed, 80–100 MPH, and thought about killing myself in a crash. It was dumb, yes, but I finally calmed down and returned home. I made bondage pictures of her.

“To ease the pain, I dated other girls. The more I dated, the better I felt. I guess like all red-blooded American boys. This was the start of my ‘Little Black Book.’ I even dated the tomboy that lived across the street. She had grown up!

“After work, I would drive around for hours, a lot of times, and go fishing by myself until the sun started to come up. Sometimes I would drive by the homes of my dates, past, present and those I hoped to date in the future. There were always new girls coming to shop at Leeker’s.

“John Davis was going to Wesleyan. He had a serious girl friend. Other friends were going into the military or to college. During my first year out of high school, I worked. I tried some summer courses at Wichita State University, but I was always behind, or tired, so I cut classes and then just dropped out. I thought it was a pipe dream to try to do better in the world. I just wasn’t ready for college yet. I didn’t feel good about that.

“Somewhere in the year 1964, maybe early 1965, I moved into a rental house with another co-worker/friend on North Salina St. off 17th St N. The friend needed someone to help pay the rent. Being young and restless at home, I agreed. I’m not sure if my folks approved, but they said I would be welcome back any time. It was my first time away from home for any length of time, but it was close by, so I really never got homesick. I dropped by to visit or eat.

“There [was] a dark element hanging around, I believe. At Leeker’s one night, some local boys tried to rob the pop machine outdoors. They didn’t know that I and my co-worker were inside. We heard the noise and went out to investigate. One had a pry-bar and held it at us in a threatening way. My alpha-male kicked in. We used to stamp prices on items in the store, and I drew my stamper. I think they thought it was a gun. They quickly left, driving a black-silver 1957 Chevy. We reported the incident to the police and later to Mr. Leeker.

“For me, the hunt was on. I would not rest until I found that car. After work, I drove slowly up and down the nearby streets. I finally found the car. Instead of contacting the police, I simply parked down the street (it was nighttime) and went over and cut their car tires. We had no more problems from them.

“Another event might have affected me. One night I was working alone. I wanted my housemate to think I had a hot date. I stole some cosmetics and doctored myself up, like a girl had kissed me a lot. When I applied the cosmetics to my face, I had a funny feeling. I enjoyed it. I drove around for a long time, in sort of a daze. But it worked. The next morning my friend said, ‘Wow, a hot date, yes!’ But I remembered the cosmetics and used them again.

“Working alone, at break time, I started looking at detective magazines. I was soon addicted to them and was always looking for ‘strung-up’ models in distress. Also, I made an early hit-kit, finding things in the store to build it. I had no one in mind, but as I was reading these magazines, I just had the feeling to do so. There was no plan, just a fantasy. I was busy, working. There was no time to go completely dark.

“When I visited John, he and his friends talked me into coming to their college in a year or so. In 1965, I went to Kansas Wesleyan, in Salina, north of Wichita. I signed up for the general curriculum.”

Rader still needed to make money, so on weekends, he often returned to Wichita to work at Leeker's. At times, he broke into pop bottle machines. "I needed gas money." He also became more extroverted and indulged in plenty of socializing. His poor grades worsened.

"I turned 21 in March. Some of my college friends had me buy some hard liquor. We had a shot or two in the college dorm, 'male bonding time.' I dated a lot of college girls and saw less of my girlfriend in Wichita. There were too many college parties.

"I started BE here, taking small items that would not be missed. I cased houses." From minor pranks that had no disturbing implications, aside from boyishness, he crossed into more seriously criminal territory. With each success, the ego satisfaction deflected the moral implications. His mother had once implied he was a thief. Now she was right. But this seemed minor. He believed he had a moral boundary and that when he hit it, he would turn back.

"I would do what I call cubing. It started in childhood, as make-believe. Those White Hat fantasies turned dark. They probably started before I can remember. I would cube into a storyteller for my brother, mostly at night. I cubed into a cowboy when we played. As I got darker fantasies, I cubed into [a] lone wolf. I spent endless time inventing my make-believe fort. As I grew up, the mental cubing was [an] escape from a boring class or job. I found time to daydream each day, because it was my best time. It always recharged me. When I felt alone, my cubing made me feel better. It was easy to cube into [the] Dark Side as my secret. I wasn't hurting anyone, only in my mind."

GOING DARK

During Rader's final year in high school, a sensational case had caught his attention. Starting in 1962, a series of murders had occurred in Boston. Someone was entering homes and strangling women. At first, it was older women, but the pattern shifted to include college coeds. They were often sexually posed and sometimes the killer fashioned the stocking he used to strangle them into a bow. The final victim was Mary Sullivan. The killer had thrust part of a broomstick into her vagina and propped a New Year's

greeting card against her foot. Two scarves were tied into a bow around her neck and semen dripped from her mouth.

On November 5, 1964, Albert DeSalvo was arrested for a series of rapes attributed to the “Green Man,” named for his green work clothes. He had previously served a sentence for sexual assaults as the “Measuring Man.” He soon confessed to being the “Boston Strangler.”

The case was turned into an instant bestseller, *The Boston Strangler*, in 1966. Rader read it. “I loved this book. He was a real strangler. The Boston Strangler, one of my most followed and studied Minotaurs. I read the book many times and watched the movie. He did a lot of prowling, trolling, used ruses to gain entry into their apartments. I even wore green pants and sweatshirt [like him] at my early murders. With strangling, there’s something about being close to that person, your hands the ‘power and control.’ Can’t recall his victim number, but it was close to my number, females of all ages. I copied, reduced, and put the cover of that book on one of my 3x5 cards. One aspect of his crime or related psychopathic persona, something to do with the health-related matters to his kids, which I related to my mom and her hand caught in the sofa. Now I wonder if there were other incidents in my life I can’t recall or the drowning of that kid with my cousin—something related to being held, trapped, in terror, and someone nearby that could help if they wanted to, or NOT!”

That same year, under the pressure of the escalating war in Vietnam and his own failing grades at Wesleyan, Rader joined the Air Force.

“With the Vietnam War, if you had low grades or were not in college, the Army got you. So, I join the Air Force. Paul turned 19 and joined the Navy. During the summer of 1966, I worked at Leeker’s in Haysville, KS. Mr. Leeker’s brother Bill ran this one. I dated a few girls, but due to my upcoming service, my relationship with my main girlfriend had cooled.”

In the middle of July that year, newspapers around the world carried the shocking story of eight nurses being killed overnight in Chicago. The lone survivor, who had crawled under a bed, described a pockmarked white male with a tattoo as the killer. Richard Speck, twenty-four, was soon apprehended. He was an unemployed loser with a history of head injuries and violent assaults.

“I read quite a bit about him. It was big news in 1966. His case, like [the] Clutters, was about being grabbed in terror and held by a madman. They were strangled, which excited me.”

Less than two weeks later, on August 1, Charles Whitman also made headlines by climbing up to the twenty-eighth floor of the clock tower at the University of Texas at Austin and picking off people who were walking across the open area below. He murdered fourteen people and wounded thirty-two before he was killed. Two more victims were added to his toll when his deceased wife and mother were found.

Speck and Whitman both commanded headlines. It was clear to any impressionable nobody that this was one way to become *somebody*. In fact, at the end of 1966, a teenager named Robert Smith used his new rifle to kill women in a beauty salon in Arizona. He stated that he wanted to become famous, like Speck and Whitman.

SERVICE

“In August, an Air Force recruit drove me and others to Kansas City. After a day or two, we flew to Lackland Air Force Base for basic training. On the last day of September, I went to tech school at Sheppard Air Force Base in Wichita Falls, Texas. I was assigned to be a communication constructor, so I learned to climb telephone poles and towers to install antennas.

“In the service, I collected pictures from magazines. I hid things behind, or below drawers, taped envelopes under the lips, or hid them in my car. Upon moving to a new station, I would destroy everything and start a new collection after settling in. Over the years I amassed large collections, hiding them here and there. If I was by myself, I would practice some self-bondage in the room.

“I bought a .32 auto Beretta for target practice, and I carried it overseas when I was sent. Before going to Okinawa, I hollow out the book, *The Rise and Fall of Rome Empire*, to conceal the gun, [putting] extra bullets and clips in separate baggage. The book stayed with me in my carry on. I kept the gun in my toolbox, hidden under the tools. Sometimes, when I went bar hopping, I would carry it and play out a James Bond theme. In my fantasies, I identified with James Bond.

“At Okinawa, my Hidey Holes were under my locker or in the bottom of my tool chest in a non-descript box. There, I did hire girls for sex, but not very often. Some let me hold their hands behind their back or over their head, but I paid more. I liked the girl struggling, with me in control. I had

no access to women's clothing, so I would pretend to cross-dress and wear make-up to do bondage in my room.

"I learned how to develop film there. I had a dark room. I took pictures of Slick Ad Girls and sometimes I would take a picture of a normal girl, develop it, and make her my fantasy girl, with gags and bindings.

"I didn't have real sex until age 22, and that was with a prostitute overseas, and the first time [it was] a complete disaster. Later in that same month, an older woman in her early thirties, that worked at the hotel, took me under wing. Although it cost me, she taught me good sex.

"I had ads from magazines from the canteen or I cut them out in the library. It was more exciting this way, but I was really too busy to deal with drawings and the like. I did buy a switch-blade and hand-cuffs in Okinawa. I carried the blade on trips downtown.

"Being busy seemed to stall the Dark Side. I received letters from my mother, which made me feel very good."

In August 1969, Charles Manson inspired a group of followers in Los Angeles to engage in two nights of slaughter in which seven people died. Among them was the actress Sharon Tate, who was eight months pregnant. The Manson "family" was arrested and held for trial.

"I was in Japan upon hearing this news. It held no interest, except the Sharon Tate death. Like the Clutters, she had been in the hands of terror. I heard she was pregnant. For some reason, that reversed my sexual fantasies. It was like, 'How could you kill a pregnant mom?' I know that sounds strange, but it seem my caring cube came out."

He also heard about the Zodiac, a killer who created his own mythology and gave himself a media name. He operated in and around San Francisco, California, during the late 1960s. He seemed to randomly attack couples, usually shooting or stabbing them, although he also murdered a lone cab driver. He always called police immediately after and sent letters to newspapers. In one instance, he sent parts of a coded message to three newspapers that he challenged readers to decipher. The message attested to how much he loved to kill and warned that he would do it again. He also bound some victims. Rader says he paid little attention to this offender, despite the similarities in their style (including an afterlife fantasy). A Zodiac survivor even described the ruse the killer had used, that of a fugitive, which is similar to Rader's. The Zodiac was never identified, a fact that should have placed him in Rader's Minotaur Hall of Fame. "I just never

studied him. Maybe my subconscious picked it up. I probably read about it.”

FALLING IN LOVE

Shortly after Rader returned to Wichita in August 1970, his mother took him to church to introduce him to a “nice girl,” Paula Dietz. She was attractive and he was no longer shy, so he asked her out. His father approved as well. He soon dated her regularly. He enjoyed his parents’ satisfaction with his choice and hoped he and Paula would marry. “They would ask me how it was going, which made me feel very good.”

“In the fall of 1970, I had little time or thoughts about the Dark Side. I was in love. You’ve heard the expression, ‘love-sick.’ That’s how I felt. Once, we had a church gathering one Sunday evening. Paula’s folks showed up, but she didn’t. Did she not like me? We’d had two or three dates. I became physically sick. I threw up outside, it hurt so bad. Later she said something had come up. I never told her I became sick. I just said I’d missed her.

“Our dating continued. We spent Christmas together and in January 1971, I proposed. She accepted and we went looking for rings. Finally, we made wedding plans and found a place to live. Under her mom’s watchful eyes, we set that up before our wedding day, May 22, 1971.

“In the meantime, I had started college at Butler County Community College in El Dorado, about a 20–25 minute drive from North Seneca, where I was staying with my parents. I worked part-time at Leeker’s, too. There was little time to wear a Black Hat.

“At school [I was] busy. I tried hard to get back on the educational track. The first Dark Crack happened with Paula’s mishap. In Feb 1971, on a snowy morning, she was heading for work in Big Red, her car. She lost control on a bridge on 53rd St. N. She collided with a westbound high school kid’s car. She was rushed to Wesleyan Hospital with a broken back. Big Red was totaled. I was at the campus. Her sister, who also attended this college, found me at the library and told me the bad news. I quickly got ahold of my instructors to get permission to miss class. I drove to see Paula in the hospital. The roads were snowy and dangerous.

“On the day I visited her, I happened to stop at the southeast corner drugstore. There was a card and book store next door, and in it, a nice magazine section. Like a magnet, they drew me, mainly the detective type, plus the paperback books. She stayed in the hospital, and while shopping for small gifts or cards for her, I would browse these areas. The Dark Side reared its ugly head. I would buy some magazines and during slow times at school, I would look through them, or sneak-read them at home. Now I had Hidey Holes again.

“Paula healed enough to be released, but could not go back to work. She mended at her home. She had to wear a back brace.

“At college, being a lone wolf, the crack opened further. I would eat alone, read true crime, and watch coeds come and go. I also found a bookstore in El Dorado that I liked. I had a ‘mini-hit-kit’ in my car, so I think deep down, trying to kidnap someone again was not long away.

“In the spring and summer, I drove around El Dorado, looking for old abandoned farm homesteads or areas to fish and explore. The crack widened. I found some old bridges, the ones with the wooden planks and iron frames that I had once used for self-bondage. The key to this self-gratification was to be bound, hand and foot, with the rope tight in the groin area, gagged, a plastic bag over my head, a noose on the neck, and the sounds of an approaching vehicle, as it hit the bridge’s wooden planks. I would also find old barns with baling wire, or old binder twine, and with my bondage kit, I’d pretend to hang off the wooden beams. I’d find old houses, and after rummaging through them, I’d practice self gratification in a closet, with a noose on the door or clothes rack. The knife, guns, and hit kit were with me, so if an unlucky female had stopped, it [the murder spree] would have started before 1974.

“After we were married, our first home was a rental at 6220 Independence in Park City. It was a one-story ranch, about 900 square feet, with a large backyard. We had a good landlord, but I was frustrated because we couldn’t change it or work on it. I drove a 1962 white Chevy Impala. We had a good sex life, but I wanted to try some light bondage. Other couples did it for fun. Once I tried to hold Paula’s hands behind her back, but she didn’t like it, so I didn’t try anything like that again.

“Some time after we were married, I had a close call. I had wisdom teeth problems. They were all deeply impacted in my jawbone and surgery was needed to remove them. There would be a hospital stay. I wondered

what to do with my magazines and true crime books. What if I died? I had started my Hidey Hole Slick Ad folders. Some had bondage drawings, short bondage verses or stories on the bondage victims, and fantasies of them in barns, towers, and dungeons. There were early works on ‘The House of Terror.’

“I located an old abandoned farm site, that had a dump site used by locals. I added my Hidey Hole items in the dump inside plastic trash bags. Later, after my recovery, I collected the items and returned them to the Hidey Hole in my residence. I used the attic, an attached shed, the shed outside, and the crawlspace under the house. Later, I made pullout drawers under the hallway storage.

“I started work at the Coleman plant, doing assembly work on the second shift, 3:30–11:30 p.m. I had a stand-alone workstation, and I passed the time by cubing into daydreams about being a hit man and a spy. It paid well, but I quit. It was too boring. It had been a filler job while I went to school. I graduated in 1972, either in May or the end of the summer [with an associates degree in electronics].

“In early 1973, I got work at Cessna Aircraft Company. Paula and I were happy. We started thinking of buying this [rental] house and starting a family. We were volunteering at Christ Lutheran Church as youth sponsors. These were good days for us.

“But the job at Cessna lasted only nine months, as the economy went bad. In October, I was laid off. My world was crushed. I went to the Dark Side.”

4 DOWN TIME

When this monster enter my brain, I will never know. But, it here to stay . . . Society can be thankfull that there are ways for people like me to relieve myself at time by day dreams of some victim being torture and being mine.

Dennis Rader

“My brain was on fire,” Rader stated in a journal, after killing the Oteros. He felt pressure in his head, as if it were in a vise. He had never heard of this effect in the stories he’d read about killers. No one had described such a post-murder experience!

Afraid of discovery and arrest, he burned or got rid of items that might connect him to the Oteros (except the bloodstained Air Force parka), but eventually, it was clear that no one was coming for him. “The blood spots on the parka were hard to see, and I could always say I got them on it while hunting.

“I had already cut out and collected the newspaper clippings on the Oteros and started my first Hidey Hole file, using those college colored folders for term paper, with three holes. I had cut and taped the clippings inside it. I stored this in the attached shed in back, an area that my wife would not find. I also listened and watched for any information on the radio or TV. One thing for sure, that area [Edgemoor] was now off limits forever, except for maybe just a drive-by. I believe that by February or March, the hunt began again. I found it exciting to prowl at day or night. It was very easy for me to spend a little time after classes to prowl or day drive that area.

“Going to class worked well for me as a cover. I could say I was at the library and use the time to prowl and stalk.”

MANY TARGETS

A few weeks went by before Rader struck again. The difficulties in his “normal life” had made him restless. He had succeeded with the Otero hit

against all odds and he wanted to experience that rush again. Nothing else in his life even came close. He started to prowl.

“I had many what I would call ‘Projects’ or PJs. There were different people in the town that I followed, watched. I carried a clip-on knife. The folding Buck Hunter was my favorite. It was fairly large and heavy, but for any fishing trips or camp-outs, it was with me in a leather case. Later I bought thinner defense knives, like the Escape Black Folding Knife. Both were lock blades. I also always carried a pocketknife, even on Sunday. I carried a thin one to church, which fit easily in my dress clothes.

“I had numerous places I liked to check, always on the lookout for a new potential ‘hit’ as I traveled around. For example there was PJ-Rose on Pershing, close to 13th and Oliver, in a rose color home. She was a female with a younger family. No male ever spotted. I cased this house from the backyard. PJ Paint lived in a home that was south of 13th, facing the McDonald Golf Course. The male ran a paint store near St Francis Hospital, and the woman was alone in the evenings. Noise alerted her when I was there and she flipped the light on, so I left. There were a few PJs northeast of 13th and Oliver, and a few west or northwest of that corner. There was a railroad track that ran through that area, not used very often, and it offered a perfect way for me to prowl backyards unseen. PJ Backyard was one. She was in the early planning stage. I was still trolling.

“One night after classes, I walked along the track south of 13th, checked on a new house and did a little casing. People were home. I observed them while standing in their backyard. After some time, I headed back towards WSU. Upon entering 13th Street, I saw a whole troop of policemen checking the apartment area, southwest of the tracks and 13th. I thought maybe they were looking for a prowler. I just rumbled down and through them as though I lived there. On the prowl, I never carried a gun or weapon, except a legal-size knife, so if they had stopped me, they wouldn’t have found anything. I used weapons only if I was going for a hit. If they’d stopped me, I would have told them I was just out for a walk to clear my head, or I was a student at WSU, working late on homework or at the library.

“So, it was one day after classes or in between, I spotted [Kathryn] Bright arriving home with a friend, another female, maybe a sister. She was at her mailbox. She fit my fantasy profile, a coed, dishwater blond, small. I saw her go in the house, and I thought, ‘*That’s a possibility.*’”

Rader peeped in windows and discovered that Bright seemed to live alone, or possibly with the other girl, and did not have a dog. “My heart raced as the hit came into focus. From that moment on, I ‘locked’ in on that house. I would drive by to do a quick casing of the yard and layout of the neighborhood. The house was set off by itself. There was a two-story house to the east, a house behind, and a Laundromat to the west, with a busy street to the north.

“Kathryn Bright’s name was unknown to me until the news release, but she became a ‘True Detective Horror Magazine’ hit and fantasy. Her bedroom appeared to be in the center east. I was planning on tying her up on the bed, either half naked or totally. Then I would either strangle her or suffocate her. Her hands would be bound in front and tied to her neck—like a *True Detective Magazine* model I had seen. I used to fantasize about women on the cover, showing terror in their eyes, bound hand up near her neck, a man with a threatening knife overhead.

“Her street number and house address both featured 3s. After the Otero’s carnages, down deep, one part of me said, ‘You really freaked out and crossed the dark path. Better just stop, think of it as just a bad day and move on in life.’ But, the other part of me overrode good sense.

“I thought I could control it. I soon realized I was in over my head and I was too embarrassed to ask for help. I quickly was into sexual fantasies beyond my control. I [had] set my goals to be a White Hat high, but the lifeboat drifted away from my reach, until the deep water became my coping. I had trusted myself to steer the right course, but when I studied books about past serial killers, the more I learned the closer I came to believe I could some day become one. I was on a powerful train and could not get off. The track was set. Superman could stop it but I was not Superman. To cope with what I was doing, I cubed, like I would do as a kid. A normal person would go crazy from such evil intent, but serial killers are not normal. We have our own world we live in, just like a monster in his own castle. We may go out in the world and be friendly and nice, but we’re still held captive in the castle. Very hard for anyone to jump the moat and bring down the walls.”

CASE NO. 05CR498

The police report stated that on April 4, 1974, members of the Wichita PD went to 2317 East 13th Street, responding to a call, and found Kathryn Bright lying in a pool of blood. In terrible pain, she showed them that she had been stabbed, and gave her name and age before passing out. The officer saw nylon stockings tied on her wrists and around her ankles, and a blue scarf and thin cord tied around her neck. She was bruised and bleeding. She begged for help and said she could not breathe. An ambulance took her away while two officers explored the house.

The radio was on and Kathryn's purse had been dumped. A drawer containing women's panties was open and a phone was disconnected from a wall. A pair of shirts tied to a blood-saturated nightgown lay near a closet. Two teeth were on this pile, and a red garment was tied to the bed. A bullet hole was found in the door to the bathroom, and pieces of a small caliber bullet turned up nearby. A blood-covered chair in a back bedroom had nylon stockings tied to it. Glass was broken on the back door. In Kathryn's father's truck outside, the officers found a plastic cord.

Kathryn's brother, Kevin, had made the call after running from the house. An intruder in Kathryn's home had shot him twice and he had a white cord still tied around his neck. He had barely survived and needed treatment.

Kathryn made it to the hospital but died in surgery. She had eleven stab wounds to the front and back of her torso, and she had been strangled. Kevin described how they had entered the house and encountered an armed white male who claimed to be a wanted fugitive out of California. He was white, about twenty-five, five foot eleven, stocky, maybe 180 pounds, and he had dark hair and a mustache. He'd worn gloves and had been sweating profusely. He had forced Kevin at gunpoint to tie up Kathryn before asking for money. He put a stocking around Kevin's neck as if to choke him. They struggled over a gun and Kevin was shot but did not lose consciousness. He heard his sister cry in pain. He tried to fight with the intruder, but was shot again. He thought their only chance was to go get help, so he ran.

PROJECT INTERRUPTED

For Rader, this had been a close call. “I had prepared my hit items in advance. I later called it Project Lights Out. The clothes and other items were in my car, ready to go. I went to class, but could not focus. After classes I drove to the Ken-Mar Shopping Center, behind the main grocery store and changed my clothes in the car. I actually wore the same Air Force issue parka to KB’s place that I had worn at Oteros.’ I had bought the parka in Japan at a military sale; it was a big bulky green coat, but warm, and you could hide a lot of things under it.

“From Ken-Mar, I drove to just south of the WSU main campus, next to the park. From there, I walked to KB’s place. I had my .357 Magnum, Colt Woodsman, two knives, extra rounds, the magazine in a shoulder holster. The Woodsman, a .22 auto target pistol, was not the best gun to use to confront with. This was the same one I had used at Oteros’ house. It would be the last time, as I accidentally shot off a round. [Later, Rader told police that he had accidentally fired a shot because his gun had a hair trigger and had been afraid that Bright would smell the gunpowder.] At one other place, PJ Milo, during a BE, I accidentally shot a round off in the basement of that house. It had a target-trigger. But I liked it for target practice. I felt comfortable with it, and could hit whatever I shot at. I had my .357 Magnum as back-up, in the left arm holster, but it was a loud gun.

“I also had leather gloves. I had started wearing golf gloves after I saw a movie with Jack Nickelson starring as a hit man. He wore skintight golf gloves. Thus, I got the idea. I stole them so there was no trace to me. (I didn’t shoplift for fun; I did it only if I needed an item.) Since golf gloves come as singles, I stole two, and reversed one to fit the other hand, I believe, or I took both a right-handed glove and a left-handed glove. I wanted golfing type gloves to better grasp and feel than the rubber gloves that had been so difficult before.

“Also, this time I had two stocking caps: a black ski mask and a gray cap with white snowflakes on it. The gray one was in my coat pocket. I also carried some books, which I could throw away, if needed. My plan was to knock at the front door, pretend to be a WSU student, doing homework and research, looking for a new tutor to help me. ‘Is this the right address?’ I would ask. That was my ruse as I approached the door. Her car was there, a

Ford, so I figured she was home. But she wasn't. I'm not sure if I cut the phone lines. She wasn't there, so there wasn't any need to.

"I walked to the southeast corner and saw a covered screened-in porch. I tried the screen door and it was locked. I looked around for activity in the nearby house. I saw nothing, so I smashed the screen door with my fist, reached in and unlock the door. Next, the back door to the kitchen was locked. Hoping that no one would hear the sound, I broke it with something hard that I found in the porch area. I then crawled through the broken window. Once I cased the home, I realized that if she came home and first saw the broken glass as she entered, she would back out and leave. I swept it up into a corner by the door to hide it from view.

"I walked around the house and kind of figured out where I should be if she came through. I imagined what I would do with her. I thought about how it was to strangle someone. I chose a bedroom. I considered having sex with her. I was still casing the home to figure out where to approach her, take her, when I heard car doors shut, not one, but two. I looked out the window and caught a glimpse of the two coming up on the porch. One was male. I hadn't expected this. There was not much time to react, and certainly the male was a big problem. As they came though the front door, I approached them, gun in hand.

"Now as I think back, that was dumb. The door was still open and they could have bolted out the door, taking their chances on being shot, and escaped. It would have been smarter for me to wait until the door closed, but I had been startled. This was the second time I hadn't counted on an adult male being there and had to figure out fast how to deal with it. I guessed they were related.

"You might wonder why I didn't approach them with the ski mask [on], since I had one with me. The reason is that they weren't going to live, so why put it on? I figured that if I had a mask on, it would make the situation more tense. I also did not bring my usual hit kit.

"I approached them and told them I was wanted in California, I needed a car. It was basically the same story I told the Oteros. I wanted to ease them to make them feel better before I proceeded. I wanted them to think that I was just a robber, not there to do them harm.

"I had found items throughout the house to tie the female up or strangle or suffocate: nylon stockings, a blue scarf for a gag. The thin cords [were] different from [what I had used] at the Oteros,' I believe white

plastic clothesline cord, thin, but strong. One could buy it at any grocery store or hardware store. If I recall, it had a wire center [and was] hard to cut with a knife.

“I forced them into the northeast bedroom and used what I found there to tie them. I made Kevin tie Kathryn’s hands and let her sit on the bed while I tied him. If I had brought and used *my* stuff, Kevin would probably be dead today. The bonds I tied him with, he broke them, and maybe the same way with Kathryn. It got out of hand. I didn’t bring mine, because I wanted the ruse to work. If I had my hit kit, they would have been alerted.

“I tied Kevin’s feet to a bedpost so he couldn’t run. When he was secure, I moved Kathryn to another bedroom and tied her to a chair. I think I gagged her, too. When I thought she’d stay put, I came back to strangle him. I could have shot him, but I didn’t want her to hear. I had turned on the radio loud to drown out the sound of me strangling Kevin while Kathryn was in the other room. With him out of the way, I could handle her as I pleased, or that was my theory.

“And at that time we had a fight. I had two handguns. I had started to strangle him, and he had broke his bonds and jumped up real quick like. I pulled my gun and quickly shot him and hit him in the head. He fell over. I could see the blood. And as far as I was concerned, you know, I thought he was down and was out.

“I went and started to strangle Kathryn. We started fighting because her bonds weren’t very good, and so back and forth we fought. I got the best of her, and I thought she was going down, and then I could hear movement in the other room, so I went back to the other bedroom where Kevin was at, and I tried to re-strangle him. He jumped up, and we fought, and he got the other pistol, my Magnum, that was in my shoulder holster. We fought over it and I thought it was going to go off. I stuck my finger in there and jammed it. I think he thought that was the only gun I had, because I either bit his finger or hit him or something. I got away and used the .22 and shot him one more time. I tried a quick ‘John Wayne Western shot.’ I didn’t aim. I just grabbed it out of my parka pocket and fired towards his head. He immediately fell down. I believe I kicked him or tried to see if he was dead. I didn’t check for life signs. I had hit him in the mouth, apparently knocking out his teeth. There was just a lot of blood. And I thought he was down for good that time. Why I didn’t shoot him in the

head, I don't know, possibly because of all the noise and confusion, and KB's hearing it. If I had shot him, things would have turned out differently.

"After Kevin, I sort of lost control and composure. KB was tied to the chair in the bedroom and she was beginning to get hysterical. Her gag had slipped out and I didn't realize she was also less restrained in the chair. As I returned to her, she asked, 'What going on?' I told her I had shot her brother, but he would be okay. Then we began to fight. I tried to strangle her, but that didn't work. Losing control and with the problematic Kevin, I recalled what I had read somewhere about how to stab a person. That's not what I wanted to do, but I had lost control and needed to end this. If I had known Kevin [was] still alive, perhaps I would have just left or maybe shot her, but I quickly unholstered my hunting knife, a Buck Knife with an eight-inch blade and began stabbing her.

"I'd had no intention of stabbing anyone, but it happened because I lost control. That created a mess of blood everywhere, on my hands, pants, shoes. I made a vow, if I ever again had to confront to kill, there would be no knife. I would only draw it if I needed to defend myself. I thought I had just stabbed two or three times, underneath the ribs. I had read in a detective magazine that if you want them to go down, you stab under the ribs and hit the lungs or heart.

"It was total mess, because I didn't have control over it, and she was bleeding bad. Then I heard Kevin escape. All of a sudden, the front door of the house was open and he was gone. I thought the police were coming. I thought, this is it. I'm caught. I could see him running down the street. So I quickly cleaned up everything and left. Kathryn was still moaning and I wondered if I should shoot her, but I made fast tracks out of there. Since Kevin could ID me, it wouldn't make any difference if she was dead. If I recall, I also took Kathryn's driver's license. This and others became prized trophies for my Hidey Holes.

"I already had the keys to the cars. And I thought I had the right key to the right car. I ran out to their car and I think it was a pickup out there and I tried it, [but] it didn't work. And at that point in time, Kevin was gone. He had left the door open. I was in trouble. I had gone off through the back door, cutting my pants and leg on the broken glass. I lost my gray stocking hat. I ran east and then worked back north along Holyoke toward the WSU campus where my car was parked.

“I was afraid the police would catch or stop me on Holyoke. I recall that I ran so hard and fast my lungs hurt for a day or two afterward from breathing the cold air.

“From WSU, I drove home before my wife got home, cleaned up, and placed my bloodstained clothes in plastic bags. I got blood on my Hush Puppies. I moved these items to my folks’ house, hiding them in their garage. I put my guns in a sawdust box, and other items in the garage attic, or the old chicken house. My parents were both at work, so I had time to look for good spots. Later on, after a few days, I retrieved and burned the shoes, pants, and gloves. I moved the guns to a better hiding spot at their home. In this interim, like after the Oteros, I destroyed a lot of magazines from my Hidey Hole stash, and rid the house of all bondage paraphernalia. I also moved my Otero Hidey Hole items to my folks’ home. My trophy items [were] now in a green tackle box, with a good lock. I often used my folks’ place to hide items and also do Big Time Bondage when they were gone on vacations. Their place my second Hidey Hole place, and fantasy workshop in the basement, where I did bondage as a teenager.”

HOME FREE

The incident hit the news. “When I saw the news releases about Bright, I knew that Kevin was now a survivor and able to tell. Kathryn had died. Kevin had described me as sweating, and yes, I really sweated a lot. The heavy parka didn’t help, plus I had the windbreaker on, and a sweatshirt, plus I wore the black cap. Even today under stress, I sweat, yet as the years moved along and I got better, I think I did sweat less. With some, I remember being pretty cool and in control completely.

“I was worried about Kevin. He was Kathryn’s brother, I learned. I did some checking and found out where the Brights lived in Valley Center. I thought of maybe trying a hit on Kevin at some point. I never could come up with the perfect plan. The months and years slipped away, and I was pretty sure I wasn’t going to be caught for a line-up. If so, Kevin’s memory might not be that good. He did give the police a fairly good description of me, and I thought the picture in the newspaper was uncomfortably close to me. But no one ever came for me.”

Although there was some discussion among detectives that the two fatal home invasions in early 1974 could be related, they ultimately decided that there was no connection. The MO, they thought, had been too different. Whoever killed the Oteros had brought the ropes to tie them. Kathryn and Kevin had been tied with items from Bright's home. The person at Bright's was already in the house, waiting. He had not cut the phone line. He had stabbed instead of strangled her. He'd shot Kevin. No one at the Oteros had been shot or stabbed, and the males had been suffocated with bags. The knots tied had been different (granny knots vs. clove hitches). The Otero incident seemed clearly to have been some sort of sex crime, whereas, judging from the story Kevin had told, it seemed more likely that the assault at Bright's had been a burglary gone bad. Very bad.

Eventually, Rader would write a detailed description in his journal. His second murder attempt had been a disaster and he did not feel good about it. He thought he'd been more careful, but once again, the elements of chance had tripped him up.

"Later as I gathered the news clippings on KB, I taped a picture from a detective magazine to one of my Hidey Hole folders—the one that showed the girl tied with her hands in front, the way I had wanted to do with KB. I kept KB's clipping inside, and even wrote a story I believe, possibility of a fantasy of her. If I recall, I placed a piece of tape over the mouth on the model's picture as a gag. This added a sexually dimension to the folder. I recalled reading in *The Boston Strangler* that one time he had spread-eagled a victim on her bed. These fantasy thoughts played out with KB."

During the summer, still unemployed, Rader worked up more projects and broke into some houses. Several people had close calls. Some knew it, some did not. There was Project Co-ed, a woman in one of his classes at WSU. He followed her after class and found that she lived with her parents. "I drove by a lot to preplan a kidnap, but eventually gave up." Project Milo had a husband or boyfriend. When Rader broke in and entered the home, he found more male than female items. "I waited a while and left."

He was not going to stop until he had found his thrill again.

EROTIC ENTHRALLMENT

After studying serial murder over the past several decades, we now know that there can be different motives and a variety of precipitating factors: some killers are driven by lust or anger; some are psychotic; a few have a specific mission; and some want to enrich themselves. Some kill instrumentally (eliminate witnesses to another crime), some seek power, and some commit murder for no particular purpose. A few have turned themselves in and some have expressed remorse. Combining theories, I offer an explanation of one mechanism. I call this the cycle of erotic enthrallment. Rader clearly demonstrates it.

Many experts hold the opinion that both biological and environmental factors are involved in a killer's development, each modifying the other such that the manner in which a person perceives a situation, and proceeds toward a violent resolution, is unique to that individual. (I favor the work of Adrian Raine and Debra Niehoff.) Some killers might have genetic or physiological predispositions, but no matter how they might develop the need or desire to act out violently, something in their lives sets off certain emotional reactions. The chemistry of those feelings translates into their behavior. For some aggressors, the ability to properly evaluate a situation becomes impaired, and while most violence occurs under some type of provocation, lust killers initiate it for pleasure and erotic stimulation. Driven by the need for this form of arousal, they can become predatory. Everything else in their lives pales in comparison to the act of sexual murder. The development of this behavior results from a cumulative exchange between their perceptions and their biology. It all gets coded into their unique neurochemistry and becomes an emotional record. The greater the intensity of the pleasure, the likelier it is that they will repeat this behavior.

Dr. Adrian Raine, a neuroscientist from the University of Pennsylvania, has found brain deficits in several areas in violent individuals—specifically the limbic system (the emotional center) and the prefrontal cortex (where inhibitions form and decisions get made). These deficits may influence such people to be impulsive, fearless, less responsive to aversive stimulation, and weaker when faced with the challenge of making appropriate decisions about aggression toward others. Predatory murderers are often lacking in empathy and are more likely to attack a stranger than are those whose violence is reactive or emotional.

The behavioral machinery of the brain in the context of erotic enthrallment appears to involve the neurotransmitter dopamine. Lust triggers the hunt for something to satisfy it, and personal circumstances define the focus and goal. Dopamine and norepinephrine levels surge in situations involving novelty, triggering the brain's reward system. Thus, we approach with anticipation those situations that offer pleasure, and dopamine assists the brain to build toward an edgy high. And we typically seek such experiences again.

One theory focuses on “incentive salience.” This notion contends that dopamine is part of prioritizing: when something important happens, dopamine is released. It helps us to be alert, as well as to define and be motivated toward a specific goal. Dopamine appears to feed the thrill of being alive and to assist in assigning priority to certain activities and attainments. It may also be involved in the sense of enlargement that follows activities that make us learn, grow, and feel in control.

Yet the brain adapts and dopamine levels flatten. When levels are low, a person seeks more stimulation. Those people with fewer dopamine receptors appear to seek more stimulation and might thus be vulnerable to addiction. For those who grow fascinated with certain types of violence—and who have that focus repeatedly rewarded in fantasies and acts—it feels better to act out than to inhibit the impulse. The person grows bolder in pursuit of action. Even if the person's enjoyment diminishes, the addiction can remain binding.

So erotic enthrallment with harm to others for one's own gratification is an incremental process that starts with environmental opportunities and associations, then becomes stronger via choices to act that stimulate the brain's reward mechanisms. In other words, when what's dangerous and forbidden appears significantly enticing, it's more likely to trigger action—and to be repeated.

5 CUBING

That is a trend, throughout my “dark side.” If busy and other interests, PJ’s and future PJ’s sort of became a day dream or a Dark Book I could open, re-read + start again.

Dennis Rader

Three unstable men with a history of sexual offenses hinted that they knew something about the Otero murders. When police grilled one of them, it became a news story. Rader read about it. He could not take credit himself—without unpleasant consequences—but he couldn’t let someone else claim the crime. Even if the men did not confess, Rader thought that police attention should focus on the elusive killer they could not find, the phantom. He had a daring idea.

“I had a study set up in the southeast bedroom. It was an early den for me, a study place for schoolwork, and catchall room. During my early cat-and-mouse, I could work on the ideas and concepts while studying. I could also draw at my desk and hide the drawing in my schoolwork. At one time for high school or college, I had an old typewriter. I used it for C/M at first.” He decided to take a risk.

CAT-AND-MOUSE #1

“Since I was in this mood of highness and attention as the newspaper ran the story on the three men (I cut the article out), I added it to my Hidey Hole folder on Oteros. I wanted credit, not someone else. Can’t remember if I type a second copy of 10–22–1974, letter or photocopied it, or even kept it. By then, I had learned how to photocopy [an item] several times or on different machines. In the back of my mind, being ‘AJ’ aware [from administration of justice courses], I also wanted taxpayers not to spend endless dollars on false leads.”

On October 22, 1974, Rader called Don Granger, a columnist at the *Wichita Eagle*. In a gruff voice with a Midwestern accent, he instructed Granger to go to the public library and look inside a book called *Applied*

Engineering Mechanics. There would be a letter, he said, detailing the Otero murders. It would prove that the men currently suspected had not been involved. Granger passed this along to the police, who located the letter.

Those three dude you have in custody are just talking to get publicity [. . .] They know nothing at all. I did it by myself and with no ones help . . . [Rader describes the Otero crime scene in detail, with body positions and conditions].

I'm sorry this happen to the society . . . It hard to control myself. You probably call me "psychotic with sexual perversion hang-up." Where this monster enter my brain I will never know. But, it here to stay. How does one cure himself? If you ask for help, that you have killed four people, they will laugh or hit the panic button and call the cops.

I can't stop it so, the monster goes on, and hurt me as wall as society. Society can be thankfull that there are ways for people like me to relieve myself at time by day dreams of some victim being tortore and being mine. It a big compicated game my friend of the monster play putting victims number down, follow them, checking up on them waiting in the dark, waiting, waiting . . . the pressure is great and somt-times he run the game to his liking. Maybe you can stop him. I can't.

He has areadly chosen his next victim or victims. I don't know who they are yet. The next day after I read the paper I will Know, but it to late. Good luck hunting.

YOURS, TRULY, GUILTILY.

P.S. Since sex criminals do not change their M.O. or by nature cannot do so, I will not change mine. The code words for me will be . . . bind them, toture them, kill them, B. T. K., you see he at it again. They will be on the next victim.

Rader had not entirely settled on BTK as his Minotaur name, but believed he had gone beyond the point of no return. "By using BTK, torture, fantasy writing, drawing, and what I had plan to do, I wrote my own criminal epithet. If caught, those words would hang me." Nevertheless, he wanted to claim a moniker that conveyed power and evoked terror. Still, he often waffled on just how bad he was.

"Many people think that I actually tortured people [victims]. That is not true, although, being tied up is a form of torture, but it's not the same. The strangulation came quick once I decided to put this person down. The plastic bags helped reduce the hand strength needed to strangle. A person doesn't die like on T.V. or in the movies, it a long time, and they struggle hard. I recall my hands hurt and ache from the Oteros. I had plastic bags to keep items in once I first tried to strangle Mr. Otero, and he came back, I thought of the bags. There was a sex thriller book I read once, the book's pervert had used large plastic bags on victims, or large garment bag to suffocate victim. I even had to strangle Mrs. Otero twice. I use my clove hitch the second time, a knot I liked. Thus the Old Bag Trick. Joseph got it

without being strangled. My hands were completely tired and ached. I believe my rubber kitchen gloves didn't help."

SECURITY

The unsolved murders inspired many Wichita residents to acquire security alarms. In November, Rader—ever watchful for opportunities—got a job installing them. "I started work at ADT Security late in 1974, so I went to school during the evening. I installed security systems in homes and businesses. Paula worked at the VA. We were active in the church as youth leaders, but I now had jobs out of town, and opportunities to prowl in other places."

He was delighted when he noticed an ad to "B.T.K." in the *Eagle's* personals section: "Help is available," with a phone number. Someone had taken him seriously. He suspected that police monitored the number, however, and he wasn't falling for it. He had admitted to four rather than five murders, because Kevin Bright's existence was problematic. With his description, investigators might link Kathryn Bright's murder to the Otero massacre and ramp up their efforts. Rader did not want "help," but he enjoyed the attention. In his journal, he wrote, "The uncontrollable Factor X is saying kill."

At home, Rader was the churchgoing, attentive husband, sharing ordinary dreams with his young wife. "I acted normally when Paula was present at home. I watched the news with interest, but not overly. I read the paper, but did not cut out the articles until later. We kept a stack of [discarded] newspapers at home, and little by little, I cut them [the articles] out and hid them.

"I also became overly defensive. I watched the road outside and had a loaded gun ready. I made sure our locked windows were secure, probably like everyone else in Wichita. I kept a gun in the car. (Paula found my .25 auto once under the seat of our car, on vacation. She was upset. I told her you never know on the road what could happen. She asked me not to do that again. I hid it in the back of the vehicles real good. She didn't like guns in the home, but I told her that all were unloaded and the shells put away. I lied, for the .25 auto was always ready to shoot, and many times the .357

mag loaded and ready as well. They were well hidden, in places I could quickly gain access to.)

“In my classes, I was nervous about police in the classroom. They were looking for *me*. But I was one among thousands of students. I did not stand out. I did not lose sleep over a hit. I did not act differently. They could not pick me out.

“At one point, we had a guest teacher, Dr. William Eckert [a forensic pathologist], who did the autopsies. Right there in front of him was the man that killed his autopsy victims. If he had only known! That was a powerful play on my part, the feeling of secret ‘Cloak & Dagger.’ I liked the feeling.”

When asked how he had coped with his “cubed” or double life, he wrote this description of “couping.”

“I named it a hit, like the Mafia. They, as well as other murderers, must have a built-in ‘couping mind,’ for us to survive. The term, ‘cold-blooded,’ yes, it is in some aspects, but we also have feelings like normal people. I will say that if I didn’t sleep well for a few nights, the details of a murder, before and after, were like counting sheep. Sleep would soon follow.

“Another aspect of coupling was where to hide the ‘mother lode’ as the years went by. After the Oteros, it started to build slowly. Back then I was into detective magazines and their covers with B/D stories. On paperback books, I would photocopy the cover, scale to 3x5 size to place on a card, and place them in my Hidey Holes. I sometimes photocopied a sexually page or two. I watched TV movies, like *The Boston Strangler*. The one with Tony Curtis I liked the best.

“I used the WSU library, a treasure chest of news, books & data. For example, BH 1, 2, 3 and 4 [the Oteros], I found everything written down or in print on them at WSU, even when they were mention in the *New York Times*.

“After a hit, I would store them at my folks’ home, church, some shed. Later, I moved the mother lode to an abandoned farm machine north of Park City, in a field. Once I had a secret place in the crawlspace under the house, and I had a couple of spots in the attached shed. Even a bank safe deposit box was used.

“Another coupling was the time period between murders. Otero and Bright were in 1974. Almost like a critter of the deep woods or a werewolf, the kill satisfied, and there was no need to hurry. And the next strong

fantasy would start from what the troller or stalker sees. I watched, and did some BE, but did not strike.

“The last part, and most dangerous, is how we can blend into society with no apparent outstanding characteristics. That is what makes a serial killer so dangerous and hard to detect. Couping, they become master of this. Not to brag, it has to be a true fact. Like the wolf in sheep’s clothing, a powerful deadly figure among the sheep, able to work, be a husband, father, lover. Almost a bad Robin Hood or Zorro, White Hat becomes Black Hat. For some unknown reason to the common man, the Minotaur has to do foul deeds to feel special.

“I had thought about suicide, but the never-ending power of B/D and S/M won over. What people don’t realize is this is a fantasy world. Collecting or doing these drawings is not good—society is really down on them. So, it’s secret. My feeling is that they [the victims] were objects, part of the fantasy. They had a role. With the Oteros, it was the murder of a family, and yes, sexually exciting. I came to a climax that day.”

There were times, even during a “hit,” when Rader asked himself, “My god, what are you doing?” But he could quickly push any doubts from his mind and continue.

SPLITTING

Rader struggles to precisely identify what happens during the transition from the good person to the bad, but he knows that many professionals are intrigued with the elements of this mechanism. Attempting to help, I sent him an analysis from a colleague. Dr. Al Carlisle had done psychological testing on Ted Bundy during Bundy’s incarceration in Utah. He also has assessed other serial killers, and his focus on how they switch in and out of their “compartments” is one of the clearest I have seen. Carlisle provided his analysis when I was writing about Bundy in *The Mind of a Murderer*, and he agreed to let me show it to Rader.

Carlisle proposes that the ability to repeatedly kill and also to function as a seemingly normal person develops through three primary processes: 1) fantasy—the person imagines scenarios for entertainment or self-comfort; 2) dissociation—the person enters a fantasy to avoid the reality of uncomfortable feelings, including boredom; 3) compartmentalization—the

person relegates different ideas and images to specific mental frames and develops boundaries to effectively keep them separate. (The three parts of this analysis naturally appealed to Rader's triangulated sense of reality.)

Carlisle notes that serial killers tend to show a public persona that appears to be "good," while at the same time nurturing a dark propensity for transgressive fantasies. Because they might have uncomfortable memories from childhood abuse, disappointment, frustration, humiliation, or being bullied or disempowered, they use fantasies to escape, to feel powerful and, occasionally, to develop an alternate identity. Rader fits this scenario. He disliked the way some females in his past had humiliated, hurt, or disempowered him.

As normal life grows boring, frustrating, or disappointing, the fantasy life provides a strong attractant. It can feel like an outside force. Unrestricted fantasy based on desire becomes unquenchable. Behaviors aimed at satisfaction become habits. Those dark feelings and acts go into a secret compartment, to be savored when alone. Remorse, self-hate, or guilt can be buffered, in the same way that donning noise-reducing headphones can help shut out distractions. Although "social obligations," as Rader calls them, can delay such behaviors, no taboo can impede the drive to achieve the high this fantasy affords. At first, it requires considerable effort to keep Jekyll and Hyde in separate rooms, but the more addictive the fantasies become, the less cognitive dissonance there is over what is right or wrong.

Carlisle sent me the following description of compartmentalization, which I also sent to Rader.

Compartmentalization is a process that all of us can engage in to one degree or another. It's a complex state of mind on a continuum that can have various healthy levels, such as with an actor who rehearses a script so intently that when portraying that role on stage or in a film he has a deep sense of being that person. At the other end of the continuum, compartmentalization, as used by Ted Bundy and others, is a very destructive process that can result in violence. At this level, it's a combination of addiction, intent, imagery, strong unmet needs, and some level of dissociation.

The actor is satisfying his needs through compartmentalization because he creates within his mind the world of his character and he can move around within the sphere of the character he is playing without losing the essence of the part. His role is open for everyone to see. He has an audience who affirms his success in this role, and once he has completed the film or stage production, he can move on to another role. He limits his acting to the medium of the production—the movie set or on stage. Once he leaves that medium within which his craft is performed, he exits the compartment he has created in his mind for that role. If he is playing Hamlet in the theater, for example, he doesn't continue to remain in the role when he goes to the beach for the weekend with his friends. His intent is to be able to access the voice, the mannerisms, the behavior and the emotions of his role upon cue as needed, and then to step

out of the role when it's not needed. He creates the compartmentalized role and he controls it. Although it may be somewhat difficult to give up a role once it has become such a powerful part in his life, he has the control over both the creation and the completion. He uses it rather than it using him.

In the case of a Ted Bundy, through fantasy, he creates a world in which he is able to gratify his sexual needs. The part he plays in the fantasy is kept a secret from others. There is no audience to affirm his success and, except for brief sexual satisfaction, there is no success. There is no applause, no congratulations on a job well done. There is no critique of his style and performance. He is the creator of his work and he has no one to tell him it's wrong.

The medium of the production is both in his mind as well as in the world around him. He never completely steps out of his role whether he is living the production in his mind or is reliving it when he is on the beach. The stage, the props, the background scenery are only in his mind. The actor steps onto the stage to play out his role. The killer steps from one compartment in his mind into the other. The actor leaves the theater for a day on the beach. The killer shifts from the pathological compartment in his mind back into the socially acceptable compartment, but he never completely leaves the theater in his mind and, in fact, it is even more active when he goes to the beach. It is with him wherever he goes, twenty-four hours a day, day in and day out.

The intent of the actor is to please his audience, his director and those who are in the production with him. The intent of the killer is to please himself through his interaction with, generally, one person. When the actor finishes his part, he receives his accolades and moves on to the next production. The killer never receives the accolades in reality so he has to pretend that he does, which generally consists of him congratulating himself. He may also attempt to get the victim to express admiration of him.

When he finishes a fantasy episode, he feels gratified but not satisfied. There has been a temporary reduction of a powerful drive but an increase in a psychic need. The intensity of the sexual release is so powerful that the person craves for more. However, as his mind adapts to the experience, the satisfaction diminishes so he has to find ways to keep the experience exciting. In the process of doing this, he progresses from hero fantasies through control fantasies and possibly to revenge fantasies.

He knows that this style of fantasy life is unacceptable to his friends and family so he continues to keep it secret, and since nobody can criticize him for it, he can do anything during a fantasy episode to satisfy his lusts.

Since he can't experience in reality what he enjoys in fantasy, he enhances his fantasy in an attempt to approximate reality as closely as possible. To help him experience it more fully, he blocks out everything going on around him, a process called dissociation. The more he is lonely and uninvolved with satisfying life activities such as relationships, sports, academics, etc., the more he has to turn to fantasy as a vicarious substitution, which he often attempts to do through pornography. The better he becomes at dissociating the world around him during a fantasy, the more real the fantasy feels to him. Instead of fulfilling his need, his need for similar gratification in the real world increases, which again, leads to frustration. He increases the frequency of his sexual fantasy in an attempt to increase the intensity of the experiences, but it still doesn't give him what he is after.

He is soon spending lengthy spans of time in his make-believe world. Since he isn't satisfied with who he is in reality, he creates a more dynamic character in his mind to give the imagery more power. His growth in his day-to-day life becomes somewhat stilted, more empty and more unfulfilling. He attempts to compensate for this by enhancing his fantasy world and stretching it into his real world. He may molest a woman in fantasy and when he sees a desirable woman later that day he may relive the same fantasy by imagining he is doing it to her. This increases the reality of the fantasy. Gradually, the fantasy world and the real world

begin to meld together. The boundary between the two worlds becomes thinner and more difficult to control.

This becomes a problem because he has to hide his fantasy world from others so they won't become aware of his pathology. He attempts to tighten his real-world compartment and may become obsessive and compulsive in some of his mannerisms. He has to be very careful to keep the two worlds, or two compartments in his mind, very separate.

Since it's very difficult—some would say, almost impossible—to have good and evil co-exist within the same mind, he has to find a way to minimize the polarity between the two parts. His criteria for determining right from wrong gradually changes over time. What was wrong for him as a child may become acceptable as an early teen and then desirable when he is in his late teens. He does this by finding justifications for his fantasy life. He may, for example, attempt to convince himself that there is nothing wrong with his daydreams since he isn't actually harming another person.

All of this activity increases in intensity and frequency and the person may become a highly energized assailant in search of a trigger to release the explosion that has been growing within him. Then comes the first victim, and once the offender has stepped over that final boundary, which has been protecting his shaky identity, his belief about who he is permanently changes, at which time both compartments in his mind will go through an alteration. He soon finds that he is incapable of fighting off the urges to repeat his crime. Now, he *is* the pathology. The day-by-day compartment becomes subservient to the greatly strengthened pathological compartment. Some say that when the killing cycle is triggered into action they are unable to stop it without something stronger occurring, such as a police officer walking by.

“He’s right,” said Rader. “I couldn’t say it better. He says it perfectly. The cat-and-mouse gave me an adrenalin rush or high. It also set a stage for the police to know that a serious Minotaur was in their mist. The actor that plays upon a stage, I’m sure, has a high rush. That’s part of the reason that person does it, although with acting, they like the way the crowd reacts to them. I would say, with work now at different places in Wichita for ADT, meeting people in their business and homes, [taking] college classes, [and being] older, my introvertedness was changing to an extrovert. Actually the college years of 1965–1966 were the start, and being a center (just a good feeling to be wanted or important or leader of the pack).

“I believe my early ‘Disneyland’ [self bondage] grew into an unquenchable habit, as Carlisle would say. The hunts and naming the PJs added a spy-type persona. They were code names, and I used a ruse and a cover story, living one life and another, become very normal. My art moved into bondage drawings, something I could keep, review and collect. Later, I used slick ads and 3x5 cards for building fantasies about Slick Ad Girls. I became a hero in my mind, and as Carlisle states, gradually, fantasy molds with reality. I don’t agree with him when he says it’s impossible to have both good and evil, and live a normal life. I had a middle ground, knowing you can cruise into either side very quickly.

“Carlisle point out how a daydream fantasy grows and the person is hooked into an unquenchable habit. I have had big daydreams forever. If some activity is dull or boring, and that includes early school or subjects I didn’t care about, like English, I looked outside and started to daydream. Another place was while I was in the bathroom. Even today, as I tidy up the Cave, I escape into fantasy. It’s like I place myself into some role. For example, right now I’m ‘falling in love’ with a college co-ed. [In my mind] she lives in Colorado, and I drove her home for Christmas. I met her family and spent a day or two there before driving home for Christmas to spend with my folks and relatives. They live in nice ranch style home. Her dad works for the railroad company in management. She has an older brother and younger sister. I have already in my mind done the layout of the house and the area where they live. After Xmas, I’ll drive back, we do some after-Christmas shopping, perhaps look at rings (friendship or steady rings) for a day or two. Then I’ll return to college for winter semester. With this ‘novel’ I can go on forever. Stop, start, add another fantasy chapter.”

This comment made me wonder if Rader has a “fantasy-prone” personality. If so, this would support the first part of Carlisle’s triad. It would have been a natural part of his life since his earliest years.

Research has identified people who can imagine events as vividly as if they were real. For example, they can make their bodies respond dramatically to the mere thought of something—skin can blister, warts disappear, orgasms occur, and allergic reactions take place without the presence of physical stimuli. The critical elements in these experimental results were the strength of the belief in the “reality” of the event and the ability to focus the imagination long enough to produce the physical effect.

Those who can vividly fantasize like this have certain characteristics in common. They report vivid memories of their early lives, feel extreme sympathy with others, tend to daydream a lot, had imaginary playmates during childhood, and show a profound response to sensory events. As adults, fantasy remains central to their lives, but they keep it secret. They are easily hypnotizable, have a greater range of tolerance toward paranormal events, and are vulnerable to certain personality disorders. (A personality disorder is a persistent pattern of maladaptive behavior that causes serious dysfunction in relationships or at work.) More significantly for compartmentalizing, they dissociate more easily and can remain longer in a dissociative state than most people.

“I’m intrigued by the idea that fantasy proneness defines a subgroup within every human culture,” said Dr. Leonard George, author of *Alternative Realities*, “a sort of human resource pool. One could devise other labels, such as ‘fantasy virtuosity,’ which more closely captures it. Depending on the cutoff used, perhaps five percent of the population could be classified as dramatically ‘Fantasy Prone.’”

The Creative Experiences Questionnaire (CEQ) is a twenty-five-item, self-reported questionnaire for evaluating fantasy proneness. The CEQ demonstrates test-retest stability and internal consistency and is strongly correlated with measures of fantasy proneness. There are also substantial correlations between the CEQ and measures of dissociation and schizotypy (a continuum from ordinary imaginative states to the extremes of transient psychosis).

The items ask about such things as whether one thought dolls and stuffed animals were real as a child, believed in supernatural creatures, had a make-believe friend, had the sense of being another person, felt lonely, spent a high percentage of time daydreaming, had detailed and intense fantasies, used fantasy to escape boredom, identified with a role, had a sense of being directed by an outside force, and had intense religious experiences.

I sent the questionnaire to Rader, already aware of how he would answer quite a few items, since he had played roles, had intense fantasies, and kept his fantasy life deeply secret.

He responded with a “yes” or “qualified yes” to most of the questions (twenty-two out of twenty-five), and mentioned the fact that his older cousin, Larry, also had a vivid imagination and had taught him how to draw and tell stories. Rader said he could easily identify with characters in stories and at times thought he might be an orphan, because he felt so different from others in his family. When not otherwise busy, he could spend half the day in fantasy, and reported that his fantasies have a “realistic intensity”—“especially the pjs.” He says that his ability to “cube” kept reality and fantasy separate: “The ‘cube’ relates to 3 in that c is the third letter of the alphabet, and the ways in which a cube has a side you can see and sides you can’t see.” He can recall his childhood vividly and, when he thinks of something cold, he can replicate the actual feeling. “Strange, but it does happen.” He can predict things “in threes,” and he experiences a sense of seemingly random incidents being related. (He actively looks for such

patterns.) As a boy, he had an intense religious experience and reports having had out-of-body experiences “in my own part of the world.” His sense of Factor X guiding his behavior also fits this overall pattern.

What these CEQ results add to Carlisle’s description is a detailed sense of how Rader’s fantasy and dissociation processes can make compartmentalizing fluid, without much awareness of any inconsistency of ideas and values. Research that links a superior ability to fantasize with the ability to dissociate suggests that the compartmentalizing process started young for Rader. By adulthood, when he began to indulge his disturbed fantasies, his “cubing” was easy to achieve. It was a natural extension of his childhood ability to assume roles. As he has said himself, “I *was* Roy Rogers.”

Because fantasy life shielded him from boredom, failure, and stress, he prioritized it. With each new rebuff, humiliation, or frustration, fantasy became a greater comfort. This begins to clarify how Rader could so easily switch into different roles with little impact on his psyche. It also explains why he has some difficulty articulating the process. For him, it would be like breathing. In his fantasy world, where all moral judgments emanate from him, his bad behavior is normalized. However, he still knew that what he was doing had moral and legal consequences.

“The best way to describe this process,” says Rader, “is to tell the facts or stories of each and see if a pattern pops out in the form of coupling and/or a switch. From day to day, we all have that, or a form we need to learn to deal with, and [we] have trained our minds to react. Coupling has to be nature’s way of protecting our minds. If something terribly sad happens, we cry, seek support of others and, in time, the hurt dims. It doesn’t go completely away and other events can trigger those past hurting thoughts. For certain details of crimes, although written down, and sometimes overblown in pride or smoke, I did not dwell day-to-day or have self-gratification on the murder. Still, [the details are] crystal clear and sharp in my memory. The act alone is enough to drive my mind away from thinking about it or seeking self-gratification.

“I had many B/D scenarios. For example, a B/D or S/M 3x5 card or picture. Or maybe I thought about victims in the silo/barn. This is the first coupling or switch for me. I did not dwell on them, but my heart would race if at night I start thinking about the murders. One of the things that pop in my mind is the detail before and after, especially about having total control.

It appears that the planning and afterward are much more present to me than the actual murders. Maybe this is why objects, pictures, and fantasies come into play, and why people feel I'm so cold when talking about a human being I have killed. A mental blocking or coupling device that has surrounded me or is built in. Could [all] serial killers have this in place before the act? It's Mother Nature's 'pre-couping'?

"All people masturbate at one time or another. Normal, but the fantasies could go astray, or maybe they have to have weird dreams to achieve a climax. For me, it can be either way. It is heightened with S/M or B/D, but [this is] not always needed. A special person, loving and caring, the mind present, the smell of perfume, and the dream of us together can be all that I need. And I think most people are like that. But I can, and have, used pictures or slick ads to get excited. I suppose that fits the compartmentalize theory. It has been asked if trolling and stalking was necessary or caused self-gratification. No, but like daydreams and film editing, patched together with PJ and slick ads, it could happen that [the target] person was in trouble before it really happen.

"Bottom line, I can love this close person, like Paula, or someone who could replace her, or that I'm dear to, and would do no harm or even think about S/M or B/D on her. But I had no problem getting excited with a stranger or sexually object. Fantasies do become vivid. The problem is that they can cloud the real event. Do you remember Jane Fonda in the high sexually show *Barbarella*? When she was raped by the musical machine and it broke down? Now that is a sexual fantasy for S/M and B/D that I used. But I could still have normal sex with my wife.

"The question arises, if I am a sociopath, how can I have normal sex? To be truthful, I can have normal sexual relations with a female. I do not have bondage or inflict pain upon this person. Their response, loving care and willingness is enough. Yes, the thought of the person, tied up, or under control can heighten my sexually attitude. I should be ashamed of myself and realize what I was thinking, and stop being a Christian. The thinking was sinful and indecent. But temptation and so many years of fantasies, even with a loved one, fantasies overruled at times. It was not like I was a sex demon all the time. The sex in Greece was normal (not girlfriends but bar girls, like most men in the military). Not until Okinawa and Korea did I have sex with females again. In most cases, it was normal, but if I could

hold their hands behind their back or above their head, or tied, I was very excitable.

“That has to be where B/D come in on love and sex that some couples enjoy. Both have fantasies to play out. I loved Paula very much, and would do no harm to her. But it could and did happen during our time, I use a sex fantasy for myself. I never asked Paula to do anything different besides normal relationships. Once, I did, but she didn’t want to. Maybe I should have [been more persistent], because at times it was difficult for me to achieve a climax. If that happen, I would drift off toward a fantasy.

“Toward midlife, the loving wife and presence of a loved one was enough. Yes, I was a serial killer, but still a loving husband and father. My fantasies were elsewhere. Compartmentalize!”

Along these lines, Rader and I discussed a television series, *The Americans*, in part as a metaphor. Created by Joe Weisberg and set during the Reagan years (the 1980s), the show follows the lives of Elizabeth and Philip Jennings, Soviet KGB officers posing with their two children, Paige and Henry, as an average American family. Because they lead double lives, the topic seemed tailor-made for Rader.

He had often viewed himself as a spy and called his murders “hits.” He enjoyed the feeling that he knew things and acted in ways that placed him outside normal human endeavors. He justified his projects with the patina of a mission, and even developed codes. (This is similar to the behavior of a Russian serial killer, Andrei Chikatilo, whom Rader learned had framed his torture of young boys as a military mission.) Such characterizations, Rader notes, fictionalize the experience of murder and infuse it with excitement: “You walk on a razor’s edge. You never know when you’ll be caught.”

A series like *The Americans*, with its exciting plot and conflicting sets of values, affirms for Rader the ability to slide back and forth between being normal and being a killer.

In the show, the Jennings live in suburban Washington, D.C. Their neighbor is an FBI agent, Stan Beeman. Their marriage is part of the façade, but their adolescent children, Paige and Henry, are quite real (and Americanized). Because the Jennings must be ready at a moment’s notice to undertake dangerous missions, they run a travel agency; this ruse gives them excuses for “emergencies.” They hide things from their kids, just as Rader hid things from his son and daughter, but their secrecy has consequences.

Rader got a kick out of Henry Jennings' hidey-holes. Because his parents are gone a lot, Henry feels neglected. Acting out, he develops secretive behaviors, such as breaking into a neighbor's home to take things. Rader identified with this. He also recognized himself in the way the characters' best-laid plans would go wrong: "It's all unraveling. I can relate to that—things gets messy. You have a fantasy of this flower and it's a utopia type of thing—then you have to improvise. Plan A goes out the window. It's unnerving. I [would] get angry at myself. I've lost control. I'll do things different next time."

I paid more notice to Paige, the teenaged daughter. She is certain that her parents are deceiving her. As she discovers more things about them, her shock parallels that of Rader's own daughter, Kerri, who had told reporters how she felt upon learning about her father's double life. I used this episode of the show to urge Rader to ponder this similarity, but he did not want to explore it. Whenever he talked about Kerri's detailed media interview, he considered her pain but simultaneously enjoyed the renewed media interest it brought to *him*. It seems likely that, once "splitting" becomes easy, even ordinary, an individual like Rader "cubes" with little, if any, overt awareness. Rader claims to love his children and to have been overjoyed when he learned late in 1974 that he would be a father.

BACK TO NORMAL

"The excitement of knowing that your wife is pregnant, how can that not be a sign you are normal or have normal feelings? We wanted to have children at some time in life. Both Paula and I treasured the moment it would happen. During the early winter of 1974–75, I was working at ADT, installing a fire alarm system. Paula earlier had told me she was going to the doctor. She arrived at noon, we dined together at a restaurant and she shared the good news. Both of us were excited!

"We'd had such problems, beforehand. My sperm count was down, according to a doctor. After getting fulltime work at ADT, we wanted to start a family. Paula was 26 and I was 29.

"Brian was born July 26, 1975, in the afternoon. I was so excited, for us and our folks. We were now a family. With a job and a baby, I got busy. Paula left the VA to be a stay-home mother."

In the outside world, the Otero and Bright investigations continued. Both hit brick walls. No “BTK” had responded to the ad with the phone number, and there were no further communications that year or the next. But Rader was not finished with killing.

6 PENT UP

You've been studying these guys for years. You just get a high.
Dennis Rader

From July 1976 until August 1977, New York City came under siege from the “.44-caliber killer,” who randomly shot people, mostly couples. Attacking thirteen people in three boroughs in just over a year, he killed six. He also wrote letters to police and media personalities, calling himself the “Son of Sam” and admitting he was a “monster.” He created an aura of terror throughout the city, because it seemed that he could strike at any time after dark, anywhere in the city, and then melt away. “I love to hunt,” he stated in one letter. “Prowling the streets looking for fair game—tasty meat.”

Special Agent Robert Ressler, from the FBI's Behavioral Science Unit (now called the Behavioral Analysis Unit), said that this case was the first in which the term “serial killer” was formally used in law enforcement. Twenty-four-year-old David Berkowitz was caught for the crimes—thanks to a parking ticket. The pudgy auxiliary policeman readily confessed, raising insanity issues by claiming that a neighbor's demon-possessed dog had commanded him to kill. Found competent, he pre-empted a trial with a guilty plea.

Rader was aware of these incidents. “There was not much to his MO, but he used a .357 magnum, like one I carried, and he felt like a demon or his ‘Factor X’ had bearing on his crimes. He also had some ideas about the afterlife, like me. Also, I had been to NYC, so crimes in that city interested me.”

Before Berkowitz was caught, Rader was prowling for hit number 6 (although it was his fifteenth “project”). Paula was pregnant again and Rader had a secure job with ADT, but he was restless. “My wife was a stay-at-home mom until pre-school for the kids, so there's a good guess she was home or visiting relatives. I used the college as a cover story or studying in the library during spring break.”

He had completed “PJ 17th” and “PJ SE.” On 17th Street, near the apartment he had once rented with a friend, he had seen a woman alone in her house at night. When she was away, he cut the phone line and prepared to enter, but she returned before he could get in, so he left. For PJ SE, he cut the phone line, but the neighbor’s dog started to bark and “spooked me.”

On August 11, 1976, Rader ran into a completely unexpected situation. “I saw a Coleman trailer for sale, so I called this Project Trailer. I once worked at Coleman, so I noticed. She had a couple of kids, school age, but seemed to be alone. I spoke with her and was going to look at it and pretend I was interested in buying it, a ruse. But on this same day, a sniper started shooting from the Wichita Holiday Inn downtown, not far away, and there were police everywhere. I left.”

CASE NO. 05CR498

On March 17, 1977, the police were sent to 1311 South Hydraulic Street. A neighbor, notified by some very disturbed young boys, had seen a woman inside the house with a bag over her head, and she appeared to be dead. The body was nude, facedown on a bed, with her feet toward the head of the bed, which had been shoved against a bathroom door. A plastic bag was tied over her head and fastened in place with a pink nightgown. Black electric tape was wrapped over her arms and ankles, and a white cord bound her hands behind her back. Another white cord was wrapped around her neck four times; it also ran down her body to encircle her wrists and ankles. The window blinds were all drawn.

The deceased woman’s name was Shirley Vian. It was her sons, six and eight, who had notified the neighbor, and police soon learned that the boys also had witnessed the homicide, from within a locked bathroom. They described a white man with a gun and a small zippered suitcase. He had forced them and their younger sister into the bathroom and then tied up their mother. He had also tied them into the bathroom. Steve, the six-year-old, had seen the man earlier on the street, knocking at a door and holding a photo of a woman and child. The man had shown it to him and asked if he knew them, and he said

he didn't. The older boy had broken a window in the bathroom to get out.

QUICK SWITCH

Rader had picked March for his next assault because "it relates to threes. It was the third month. It was also spring break at WSU and a work vacation."

Shirley Vian had not been his first choice that day. "She was completely random. There was actually someone across from Dillons who might have been the potential target, or [maybe] I'm confusing this with my fantasies about this girl. It was called Project Green or Greenwood. I had met this girl, Cheryl or Sheryl, I think, at WSU and I knew where she lived, and [she had an] address with a '12.' I had another PJ on South Hydraulic. On that particular day, I drove to Dillons and parked in the parking lot and watched this particular residence and then got out of the car and walked over to the door. I knocked, but nobody answered. I have said [in other accounts that] I had another one, Project Blackout, from the name of a bar where I had seen a woman I had thought about. But I was blowing smoke. That was not a real project.

"I was all keyed up over not getting in to that house on PJ Green, so I drove and then parked and started going through the neighborhood. I had on my 'James Bond' jacket, a tweed jacket, and nice shoes. I had enough projects I'd been watching that if one didn't work out, I could just go to another. I had been in the back alleys and knew where certain people lived. That area was good for PJs, because it was easy to get in and out, and there was cover for me. There were other places I had watched, but I only wrote the key places down. It was easy for me to park at this Dillons and watch for projects, and to get in and out without being blocked. I also used Dillons copy machine quite often and pretended to shop there so I could follow people out and home. I also would buy true crime magazines at this Dillons.

"The nearby interstate was a perfect road to get me from home to different areas. It was only a nine-to-ten minute drive. There were parks nearby to eat at while I watched. I had been to these parks as a child or on grade school field trips. It had lots of older homes, 1920–1940, with alleys to walk or drive, lots of trees and places I could hide in. It was a cheaper

area of town, so folks probably had a little looser lifestyle. There were big porches to walk up on, sort of hidden from the traffic or neighbors' eyes. All in all, it was the perfect place to prowl and troll. Also, for strange reasons, I favored the Hydraulic Street areas.

"One humorous note: after walking the area north of the area by Sears, I had stopped and bought a loaf of bread to pretend I was shopping and walking home. It was in a paper sack. After my walk, I needed to head back to my car in the shopping center. I dropped the bag with the bread in a mailbox. I wonder what the mailman thought when he opened the box.

"But while I was walking away from the intended house and down Hydraulic, I saw a young boy coming back from Dillons. I figured he had a mother in the house. I had a picture in my wallet of my wife and baby, so I used it to pretend I was looking for them. I asked if he had seen them. I knew he wouldn't know them. He told me he didn't, but I watched where he went. Now I wish I hadn't used the family picture. (What will they think if they read about it or hear about it?)

"Then I went to the door and knocked. This boy opened the door with his brother. I told them I was a private detective and showed them the picture. I carried a blue briefcase, large enough for my hit kit (cord, tape, plastic bags, a gun), but not too large to be noticed when I carried it on the street, like I was a salesman or businessman. I believe I threw it away later, but I used it with other PJs, to carry items for possible hits.

"I passed as a school detective looking for the lady and her son. I had a school ID made up. (Once while looking for a job, I had filled out papers at #259 school district employment office, and picked up a business card. I had taken a Polaroid picture of myself, so I had added that to the ID card. Film was expensive, so I shoplifted it from Dillons.)

"I had my .357 Magnum, so I forced myself in and pulled the pistol. Mrs. Vian came out to see what was wrong. She was wearing a robe and nightgown. I guess she was sick.

"I told her I had a problem with sexual fantasies and I was going to tie her up. I pulled down the blinds and turned off the TV. I said that I would tie up the kids first. They would be okay if she would cooperate with me. She was extremely nervous. I think she even smoked a cigarette. We went back to one of the back areas of the porch. She was upset. I explained that I had done this before. I tried to tie one of the kids, but he started to cry. The kids got real upset. I said, this is not going to work. I was frustrated.

“I decided to put the kids in the bathroom and shut the door. We put toys and blankets in there for them. Mrs. Vian helped me. She told the kids to do whatever I said. I tied the door shut, but the kids were still yelling. She helped me to shove a bed against the door. Then I proceeded to tie her up.

“Into bondage, I had mental fantasies and many drawings of a nude woman on a bed, the bedframe Victorian style, iron wrought, plenty of places to tie a person to. When I see such a bed, I get sort of sexual excited. Both of my grandparents had such beds. Could it be an early piece of sexually feeling, to sleep in a bed of this type? I recall at a very early age, in my grandparents’ bed, I believe the Cook side, a cold night or nap time, beside my Grandma or Mom, a satin ribbon in her hair. I loved the feel of satin, rubbing it, perhaps the feel of female, satin, the iron bed. It was much too early to think sex, yet why do I remember it so strong! The main fact is the binding as I tied Shirley up, those were important. If a phone call hadn’t stopped me, I probably would have taken pictures of her and, either there or viewing the pictures, had self-gratification, but I don’t think I had a Polaroid camera yet.

“At that point, she vomited. I think my being there had made her worse. She was partially tied when I got her a glass of water and comforted her a little bit.

“This compassion runs in most of my crimes, and I see that in *In Cold Blood*, as Smith, I believe, reties Mr. Clutter, asking him if he is cold, and then later on kills him without mercy. In the Oteros’ house, I laid a coat or parka down for Mr. Otero, because he had been in a car accident, and his ribs were still sore. I originally had taped or tied all of them up, and when they complained about it being too tight, I retied them. When I had placed the bag over Junior’s head, Mrs. Otero was completely upset more for him than her husband, so I removed it to think things over. With Shirley Vian, I placed the kids in the bathroom with blankets, toys, and books to try to comfort them. Now, why would I be so nice, and then turn to murder? I guess I used that victim’s comfort zone to gain control and trust and above all else, their ease.

“I went ahead and taped her hands behind her back. Arms crisscrossed and taped is very exciting to me. I tied her legs to the bedpost and worked the rope all the way up. What I had left over I looped around her neck. I put a bag over her head and strangled her.

“I used white plastic bags, garbage-size, that you could buy in a roll. I like the ones in a box. Using plastic gloves, I folded them neatly and placed them in another bag. That bag would go with me, in case it had fingerprints or material on it. At times in self-bondage, I used that type of bag over my own head to simulate suffocation. In ways, my bondage related to victims, or I replace them in my bondage ordeals. I believe I used the same type of bag with the Oteros. I wonder if the police ever made that connection.

“If I had tape on me, or had a victim bound with it, it was extremely sexually [exciting]. Black tape was the best. It was easy to unwrap, and quick. I had made a pre-loop so it would be easier to start the wrap with gloves on. I think I had switched to latex gloves by then. I had used rubber dishwashing gloves at Oteros’ and golf gloves at Bright’s, but the double-layer latex worked the best. In my hit kit, I always carried a roll of black electrical tape with me. I also used the tape to do self-bondage, or used colored tape. Later I favored duct tape for bondage. The white cord was one I favored: parachute cord was small, flexible, extremely strong and deadly if wrapped around the neck.

“The kids were banging on the door and yelling at me to leave [their mother] alone. I told them I would shoot them. Then the telephone rang. It startled me. They had mentioned that a neighbor was going to be coming to check on them. I had thought about doing to them what I had done at the Oteros, and hanging the little girl, but I figured I didn’t have much time. I threw whatever was lying around—ropes, tape, cords—into my briefcase and left.

“The ‘messy side of a crime,’ is Murphy’s Law, or things you just don’t know about and can’t predict. The timeframe was always an issue. Some had boyfriends or husbands that might drop by or people supposedly coming over. I didn’t expect Bright’s brother to be there, or Mr. Otero. Having to deal with four for my first one was messy! In one PJ, the weather completely messed me up. I couldn’t get the pictures I wanted and couldn’t find the barn I wanted to do my thing with her.”

The story hit the news and Rader knew the kids would talk. But apparently they could not offer anything helpful to police, as no one came looking for him.

THE SPIDER

Rader had to consider what he had just done. He'd been deflected from his plan and instead of carefully planning another murder, he had entered a home that he had not studied. Clearly, he was not in as much control as he believed. He had not yet become the polished killer of his own fantasies. He went home to burn his clothes and write about his thoughts. He knew he needed to kill someone in such a way that he could feel proud.

But he had a trophy: Shirley Vian's underwear. "The Cave Minotaur had an addiction toward feminine undergarments. He had a collection hid in his Hidey Holes. Part of my M.O was to find and keep the victim's underwear. I hid it at home. Then in my fantasy, I would relive the day, or start a new fantasy. I would don the victims' underwear, slips/panties, hosiery, sexy housecoats. I would wear a wig, and sometimes a mask, and put myself into bondage, as if I was the victim, and finally do self-gratification. Due to the amount and bulk of these items, I kept them in my closet in a locked suitcase, or in boxes in the shed, in clear plastic bags."

Years later, a detective asked Rader about the amount of time that had passed between the murders of Kathy Bright and Shirley Vian. The police suspected that there might be other crimes that they had not connected to him. But Rader assured them that, while he had been prowling and stalking, he had not had any successful hits. It seemed strange that there would be five grouped closely together and then none for three years. He compared it to fishing: "I think it can be that a man goes fishing and sometimes he's not very lucky. It may be some social issues. He's busy at home or work."

Adding more to this explanation, Rader says, "I did not fit the normal profile of a serial killer. Why were there gaps of so many years? Bottom line, I was *always* on the prowl. Much like hunting or fishing rituals, you're planning, checking gear, perhaps reading and studying books or magazines. For the hunter, it may be a new gun or sporting gear to help him bag the 'big one.' For the fisherman, a new rod, reel, special lures and that secret fishing hole to locate. In a way, this fills the gap for the day in the field. The hunter might target practice, the fisherman might practice casting in the backyard, throwing a practice lure into the kids' wading pool. In both scenarios, the person has to have the time and proper season; it may take months or even years, to plan a successful day. If you go to a hunter's den, you might find a trophy. But what about those off years? Yes, he may have been in the field, with only minor kills or fish catches, and minor stories to

recall or brag about. But they will always remember and have memorabilia for the Big Day.”

The murder of Shirley Vian inspired Rader to write a poem. “I used both the Wichita Public Library and WSU’s Library to read and study poetry. Working one night at home or reading or homework, I wrote a poem about Shirley Vian, based on a childhood poem, ‘Goldilocks,’ I believe. I used to love to hear my Mom or Grandma Cook, even my Aunt Correne (Larry’s mom) read poetry to me. I just played with some nursery rhymes. I probably found them in books around the house. It had nothing to do with a poem published in a magazine [as police had believed].

“My favorite poem as I grew older was ‘The Spider and the Fly.’ Or it was a Fable. I really think if you study the poem, you see the link of stalker, ruse, bondage and death. The spider’s web is the binding. In the summer even as I grew older, I was fascinated by a spider’s web, watch them spin it. Sometimes, I would find an insect and feed the spider. It was sort of sexually to me, an early life link to bondage. In my clippings and at one time I had a horror comic book in which a man raised or found a giant Amazon spider, used it to kill his relative to inherit her estate, then telling the police it had escaped. The spider was locked in the relative’s room, spinning her and it finally ate her. At the end, the man was piloting a plane over the Amazon and had to parachute into the jungle. He was caught in a tree with his parachute and a giant Amazon spider found him. He met the same fate as his relative! It’s off the subject, but I thought it was an important link, almost an early sub-conscious sense of the hunter and prey, and the bindings. I filed it away and it emerged later in what I enjoyed.”

Onto one of his 3x5 index cards, Rader printed:

Shirleylocks! Shirleylocks
Wilt Thou be Mine
Thou shalt not scream
Not yet fee the line
But lay on a cushion
And think of me and death
And how it is going to be.

PROJECT PERFECT

Rader knew he’d been lucky. He’d made a few mistakes. Although life was pretty good in 1977, he enjoyed trolling too much to give it up. He watched

for a hit that would have little chance of complications, and spotted several possible targets before focusing on one. “I called this ‘PJ-Fox’ or ‘Foxtail’ or ‘Fox Hunt.’ The number 3 was in the address, 843. On North Pershing, I also had PJ Rose, in a rose colored home. Fox had pink color duplex, so they’re related. There are three letters in Fox’s name, it sounds similar to sex, and the Fox is hard to catch. She looked very smart, so I had to outsmart her. The date was also close to the anniversary of the attack on Pearl Harbor, and this was a sneak attack. December is also the year coming to an end and winter is the end of the life cycle. A lot of things were right about this hit.”

What follows blends what Rader described to detectives, the judge, and me.

“When I was trolling the area I noticed her go in the house one night. In the trolling stage, you’re looking for a victim, and you can be trolling for months or years. Once you lock in on a certain person, that’s the stalking phase. You might have several of them at once, but you really home in on a person who’s going to be the hit.

“The trolling stage was wide open. I might be looking and see someone else, and say, well, this is even better yet. Oh yeah, this is what I want to work on, and then I would drop the first person completely, or I might leave them in the project box.”

Rader states that he had “project after project,” mostly fantasies. “Once you latch in, you go into stalking, which is actually you’re homing in or you are working out the details.” He would then fantasize about the woman he had spotted, going through the motions over and over of “how it’s gonna be. PJ Foxhunt was one of the few that went the way I wanted it. I was in complete control. I really thought this one through. Nancy Fox appealed to me as a sexual female victim, like Bright, so I probably had an attachment with her probably more than I did on some others.”

This project was “perfect” because there were no boyfriends coming, no unexpected visitors. Fox did not have a dog, and Rader was able to do exactly what he wanted.

“At first she was spotted, and then I did a little homework. I dropped by once to check the mailbox to see what her name was. I went through her mail.”

He told police that he had found out where she worked (Helzberg Jewelers), stopped by and sized her up. He would later say that he knew

where she had worked only after he saw it in the newspapers.

“It became a more complicated fantasy as I neared the chosen date. I practiced. I had an old window at home stored in my main outdoor shed. Like Fox’s window, it was double-hung. I had practiced at home on cutting glass with a glasscutter, tape and a gloved hand to remove the glass, which would make less sound and with less glass to be broken out. Once that area of glass was removed, it was easy to pry the latch apart, or unhook. On a BE, there’s a powerful feeling as you enter someone’s territory, the smell and fixtures surround you [and there are] unexplored parts of the house, with treasures to find and keep. It is a violation to them, yes, sort of mental rape. I can completely understand why burglars are attracted to it. This was a controlled BE, and neater than with Bright.”

Rader had chosen a date that was symbolic for him, and also gave him the excuse of being out at the library to study for classes. “I parked north in front of some other apartment complexes, two or three blocks away, and walked east, then south. It was a cold night. My coat hid my gun and tools. I don’t believe I carried anything in my hand to look suspicious. If anything, I had a paper sack with a loaf of bread sticking out the top. I had no camera, which was too big to hide properly. Hers was the south part of the duplex. The apartment on the north side was dark.

“I knocked first to see if anybody was home. I had studied her work routines and knew she usually arrived at a particular time. I just wanted to be sure. Nobody answered the door, so I looked around, went around to the back of the house, and cut the phone lines. I cut the window, broke in and waited in the kitchen for her to come home.

“I remember a Christmas tree by the window. I was struck by Nancy Fox’s cleanness, and for some strange reason, I felt more powerful, that I had complete control of this person and her things.

“She came in. She was startled. She asked what I was doing there. After we confronted each other, I told her I traveled a lot, I meant no real harm. I had a sexual problem. I wanted sex. I would tie her up and take a picture. She took her parka off. I believe it was white or cream colored. As she laid her parka down, and began to smoke, I sat on the couch, and she sat in a chair west side of living room. She was upset.

“We talked for a while. I went through her purse, identifying some stuff I’d want to take, and she finally said, ‘Well, let’s get this over with so I can go call the police.’ She sealed her doom for sure when she told me she

would contact the police. I wore no mask, or anything to hide my face. I had to kill her.

“‘Can I go to the bathroom?’ she asked me.

“I said, ‘Yes.’

“She went to the bathroom. I put something in place to block her from closing and locking it and kept an eye on the door, while undressing. I told her when she came out to make sure that she was undressed. She left her sweater on. I started to remove it. She asked me not to, so I didn’t. For some reason, she asked that I leave the bedroom door open, which I did. This relates to other times when I respected a victim’s request.

“I handcuffed her, hands behind her back. I had her lay on the bed, and then I tied her feet and gagged her. I asked if she had ever had sex in the butt with her boyfriend. I had no intention of normal rape sex or even sodomy. I wore no condom at that time, so actually to me it was mental rape or sodomy. That’s all I needed with a victim in bondage. The act of strangling brought gratification quickly, along with the victim struggling.

“I got on top of her, and then I reached over, took a belt (mine or hers) and then strangled her with it.”

Depending on the audience, Rader has given different versions of what happened next. In one version, Fox died quickly. But the story he told the police resembles his writings to me: “[Fox passed out.] I had her come back, and I whispered in her ear a little bit. I told her I was BTK, I was a bad guy. [This] was the torture thing. You can visualize being tied up and knowing that something is going to happen to you, and you can do nothing. That’s my torture.” In Rader’s mind, Nancy Fox had become a Glatman-type victim, aware that death was coming for her. Fox tried to fight, but Rader had the upper hand. She grabbed his crotch and squeezed hard, hoping to force him to loosen his hold, “but it actually made it more excited.

“I took the belt off and retied that with pantyhose real tight, removed the handcuffs and tied her hands with pantyhose. I think I might have tied her feet, if I hadn’t already tied them, but I think I had. At that time, I masturbated into her blue nightgown. It must have been like with Josephine Otero. I was too sexually excited to hold. Blue, one of my favorite colors, matched with the blue nightgown.

“As she was dying on the bed, I rifled through her drawers and her purse. I dressed and then went through the house, took some of her personal

items. I kept some of her nice feminine clothes and jewelry. For some reason, jewelry attracted my attention. They were personal tokens, some things of value to that person. Maybe it was my 'Viking gene' or I was just a common thief. In most other places, I had been in a hurry, but I did have some time there. At times, I pawned these items, but usually not in Wichita, for I figured the police might have jewelry IDed out at local pawnshops.

"Her driver's license became part of my memorabilia, to be kept in my most secret Hidey Hole. These are my trademarks, and a must for the perfect victim-bondage-related matters. Personal clothes add sexually excitement, especially if feminine clothes."

Rader thought about giving a piece of Fox's jewelry to his wife. "I thought, no, I'm not going to give it to my wife, that's too cruel. I thought about giving it to my daughter once. And I maybe did give it to my daughter. But I don't think so. I think I still have it." He also took some lingerie. "I did some sexual things to those later." He commented that Nancy Fox was a nice family girl. "Leave it to a weird guy like me to do that.

"I cleaned the house up of any trace of me, checked everything, had a drink of water, turned up the heat, and left. I put these items in a pillowcase, along with her purse items. As I left by [the] front door, I placed them in a nearby bush. As I walked back to my car, I would have nothing in my hands, or just that sack with bread bought at Dillons, in case the police stopped me. As I left the area, I would go back and grab the pillowcase. I called Paula from a pay phone to tell her I had car trouble and would be late.

"The items I took I kept in the outdoor attached shed, behind a false wall. Later, I buried them under the house in a special container. Pantyhose of all colors I could use for tying, bondage, a facemask, strangling and self-gratification."

Craving attention the next day, Rader decided to risk sparking the investigation himself. He called the police. Although the call was brief, a recording was made of his voice.

"Our crew often stopped at a café next to Organ's Market at Central and St. Francis. The pay phone was nearby. Being on a high, I made the call, but it was dumb, for I was in my company's truck. Later, the police play back my voice [on TV news]. I often wondered if someone who knew me would figure it out. I sweated B-B every time they played it.

“I did cover and hold the phone with a handkerchief. That must have saved me, voicewise, [and was] probably the reason the dispatcher asked me to repeat the address. Why I left the phone off the receiver, I don’t know, perhaps nervous, or delay, but it could be traced. Maybe it was a cat-and-mouse move! Probably a thing you do when you’re younger, and if you think things out you wouldn’t do it. (I once called police station from my home when I was drunk, but it wasn’t taken seriously.)”

Rader jump-started this investigation because he wanted to see something in the news. “I get quite a bit of excitement reading stuff [about what I did] in the paper. You sit there and they talk about you on TV. That’s pretty high type stuff.

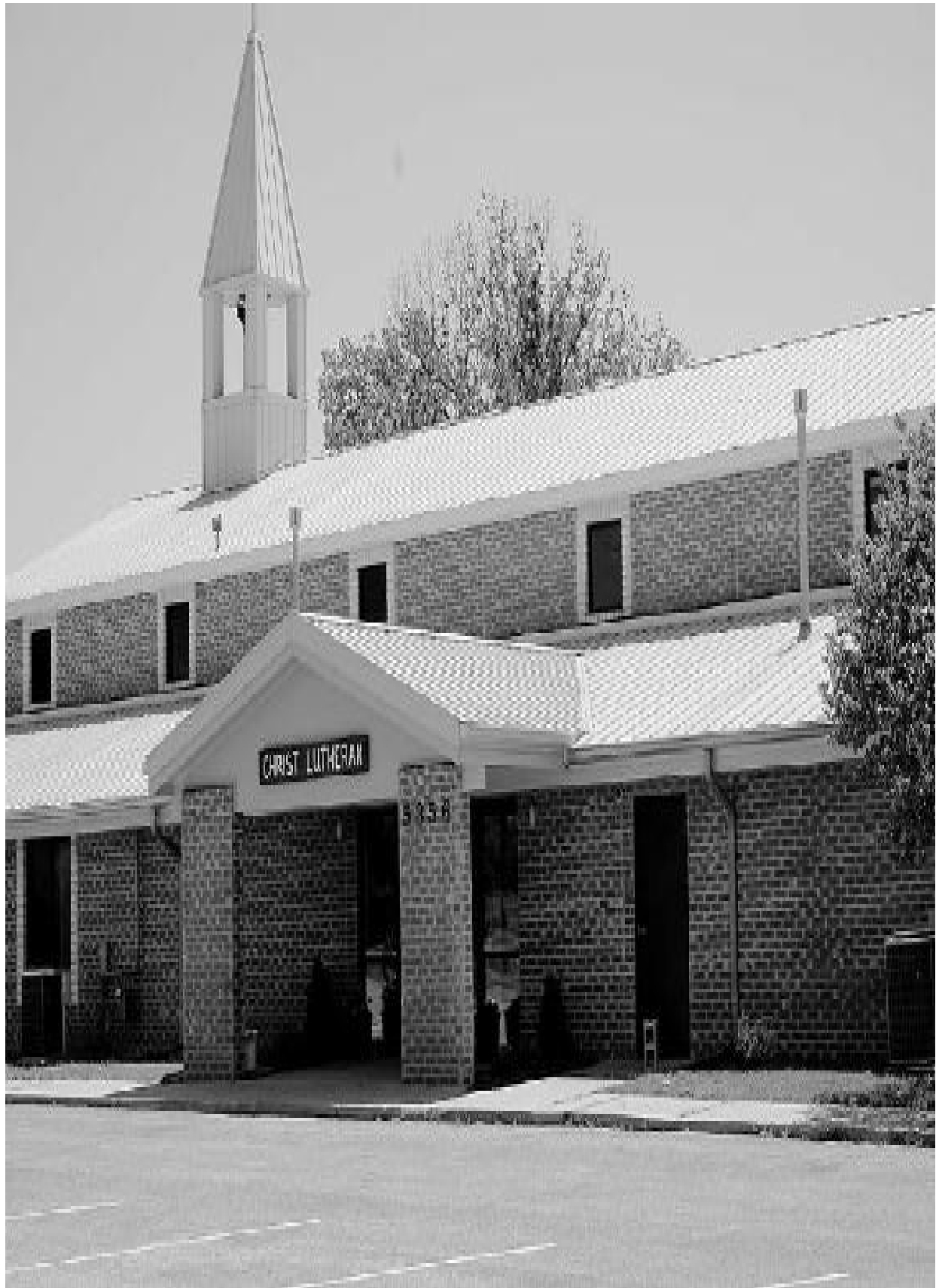
“I was the team leader, the lead man, working at a building on North Waco. That morning, after getting my crew line out, I headed back to the shop to pick up supplies or check on my next job. I drove to that one in the evening, listening to news on the homicide.”

CASE NO. 05CR498

A call from a pay phone on Central and St. Francis came in to the police dispatcher just after 8:15 a.m. on December 9, 1977. The caller said, “Yes, you will find a homicide at 843 South Pershing, Nancy Fox.” The voice was male and the phone receiver was found dangling, off the hook. The front door to Fox’s pink duplex was locked, but a cut phone line and damaged window in the back attested to something amiss. Inside the bedroom was the body of a young woman, twenty-five-year-old Nancy Fox. She lay face down on the bed and her ankles were tied with a yellow piece of clothing. A red piece of clothing bound her hands behind her back.

The home was remarkably neat and clean, although a burned-out cigarette was in an ashtray and a purse had been dumped on a table. The heat was uncomfortably high. The phone receiver was on the floor. Jewelry boxes had been disturbed and a pair of pantyhose lay on the bedroom floor. Police found pry marks on the window lock. A pink sweater covered Fox’s body, her panties were pulled down, and two pairs of pantyhose were wrapped around her neck. Semen stains were

on a blue nightgown found near her head. The cause of death appeared to be strangulation.



Christ Lutheran Church, where Rader was president of the congregation, and where he took Marine Hedge's body. Katherine Ramsland



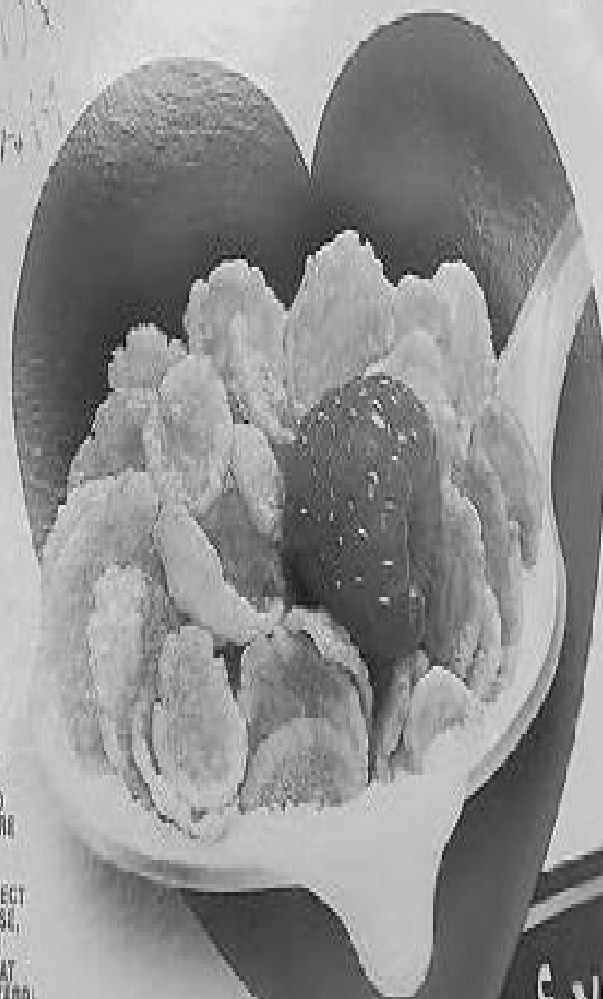
The Nancy Fox doll that Rader sent in his cat-and-mouse communications. Courtesy of the Office of the District Attorney, 18th Judicial District of Kansas at Wichita

Classics

Toasties

Corn Flakes

Box
Grain



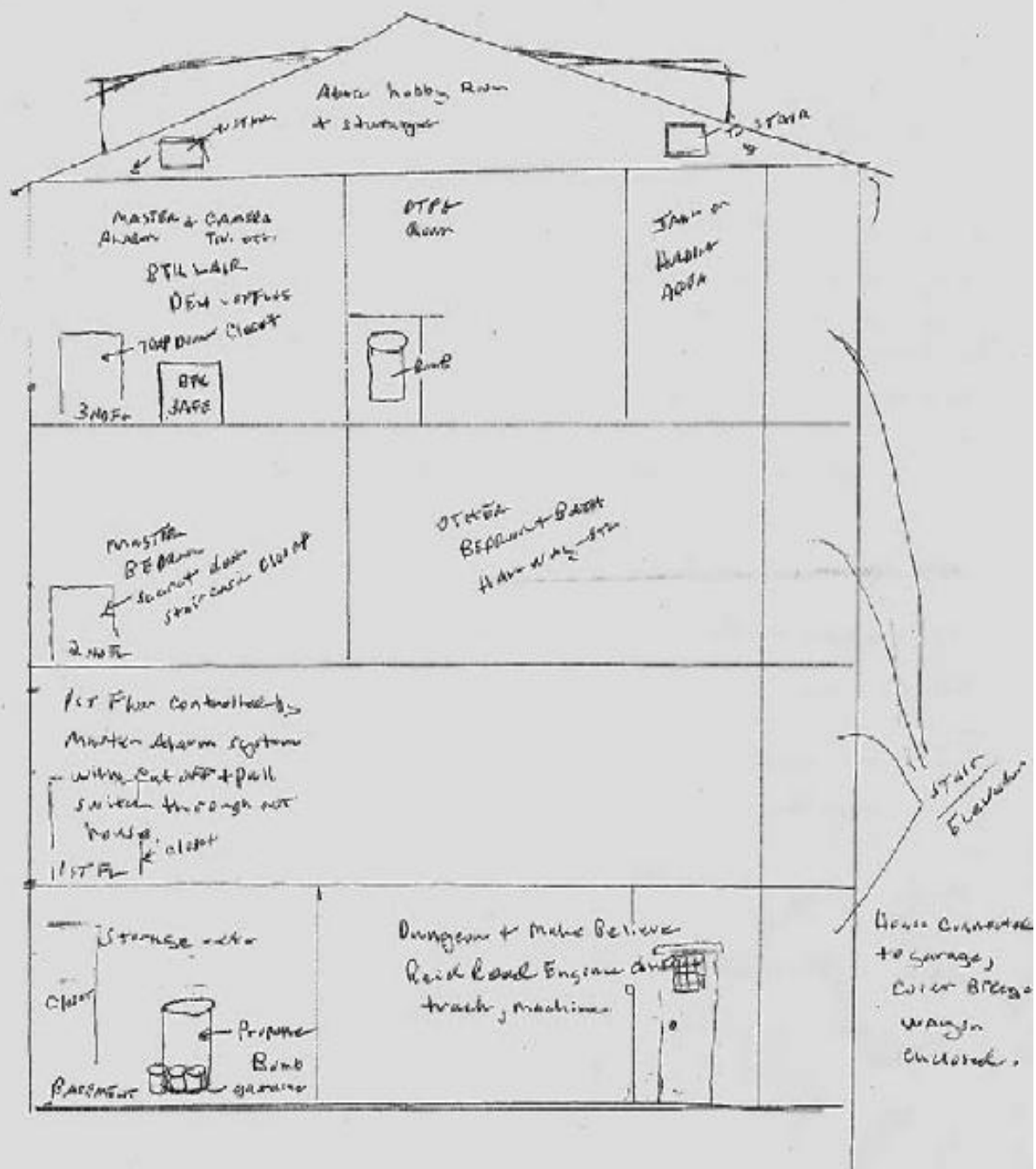
©
NUTRITIONAL
SUGGESTION

ENLARGED TO
SHOW PICTURE

WHILE MANY
FACTORS AFFECT
HEART DISEASE,
DIETS LOW IN
SATURATED FAT
AND CHOLESTEROL
MAY REDUCE THE
RISK OF HEART DISEASE

of your

One of the “BTK” cereal boxes Rader used to deliver a cat-and-mouse package. Courtesy of the Office of the District Attorney, 18th Judicial District of Kansas at Wichita



B.T.K. LAIR

Rader's drawing of "BTK's Lair," his fantasy torture dungeon in a barn.



Dennis Rader's capture. Courtesy of the Office of the District Attorney, 18th Judicial District of
Kansas at Wichita



Interrogation of Dennis Rader with Lieutenant Ken Landwehr (right) and FBI Special Agent Robert Morton (left). Courtesy of District Attorney Nola Tedesco Foulston (retired)



KASPER INTERNAL KDOC - OFFENDER POPULATION SEARCH

Kansas Adult Supervised Population Electronic Repository
Kansas Criminal Justice Information System



**OFFENDERS SHALL NOT BE ARRESTED SOLELY ON THE BASIS OF INFORMATION DISPLAYED
ON THIS SITE**

RADER, DENNIS L. (KDOC # 0083707)

This information is Current as of: Apr 16 2013 10:53AM

Name(s)

Name Type	Name
Conviction	RADER, DENNIS L
True	RADER, DENNIS LYNN
Alias	KLLMAN, BILL THOMAS

Identification

KDOC#	SIDNum	FBINum
0083707	11273107	461221HC6

Birthdate(s)

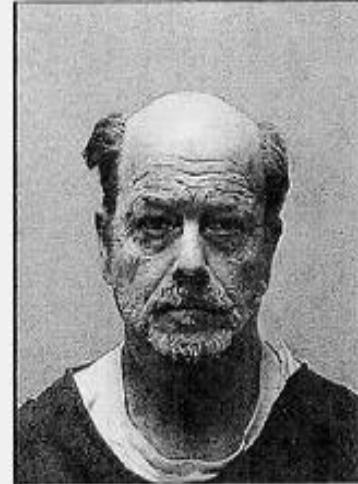
Birthdate Type	Birthdate	Age
True	Mar 09, 1945	66

Demographics

Eye Color	Hair Color	Height	Weight	Gender	Race
Green	Brown	5'-11"	181	Male	White



RADER, DENNIS L
Approx Picture Date
2013-02-05



RADER, DENNIS L
Approx Picture Date
2013-02-05

Current Status reported by Dept. of Corrections

Earliest Possible Release Date (1)	Current Status	Admission Date	Current Location (2)	Custody Level
Feb 26, 2180	Incarcerated	Aug 19, 2005	El Dorado CF-Central	Special Management

- (1) This date could be affected by a parole board decision or good time and/or program credit.
(2) Click on Location for the Facility web site.

Offender Documents

Conviction(s)

County	Case Number (I)	Offense Date	Sentencing Date	ACS	Criminal Conviction Description	Counts	Crime Severity Level	Case Status (II)	State
Sedgwick	05CR498	Apr 04, 1974	Aug 17, 2005	N/A	Murder, 1st degree	1	Class A Felony	Active	KS
Sedgwick	05CR498	Apr 28, 1985	Aug 17, 2005	N/A	Murder, 1st degree	1	Class A Felony	Active	KS
Sedgwick	05CR498	Dec 08, 1977	Aug 17, 2005	N/A	Murder, 1st degree	1	Class A Felony	Active	KS
Sedgwick	05CR498	Jan 15, 1974	Aug 17, 2005	N/A	Murder, 1st degree	4	Class A Felony	Active	KS
Sedgwick	05CR498	Jan 10, 1991	Aug 17, 2005	N/A	Murder, 1st degree	1	Class A Felony	Active	KS
Sedgwick	05CR498	Mar 17, 1977	Aug 17, 2005	N/A	Murder, 1st degree	1	Class A Felony	Active	KS
Sedgwick	05CR498	Sep 16, 1986	Aug 17, 2005	N/A	Murder, 1st degree	1	Class A Felony	Active	KS

(I) If Number includes JV : Extended juvenile jurisdiction adjudications with adult prison sentences stayed, then imposed.

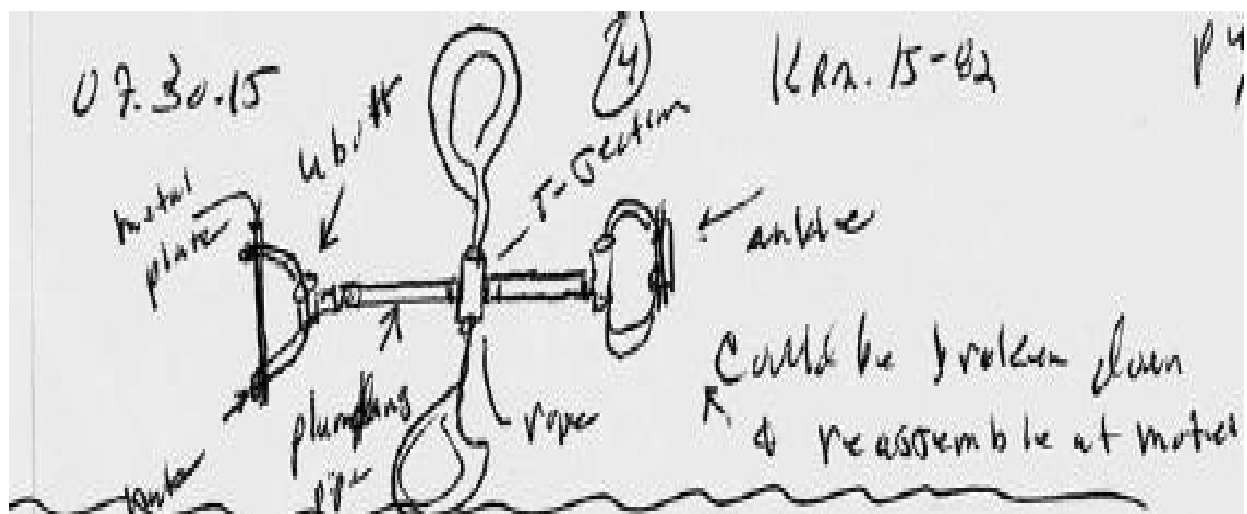
(II) If Status includes * : Denotes Active for Post Release Supervision Only.

KDOC Physical Location History

Dennis Rader's mugshot.



Rader in self-bondage. Courtesy of the Office of the District Attorney, 18th Judicial District of Kansas at Wichita

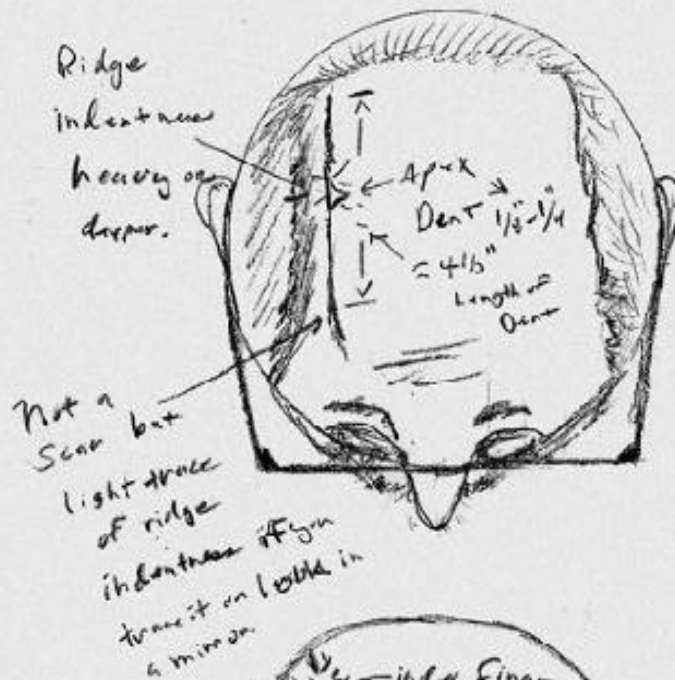


Rader's drawing of his homemade U-bolt device for bondage.

AL

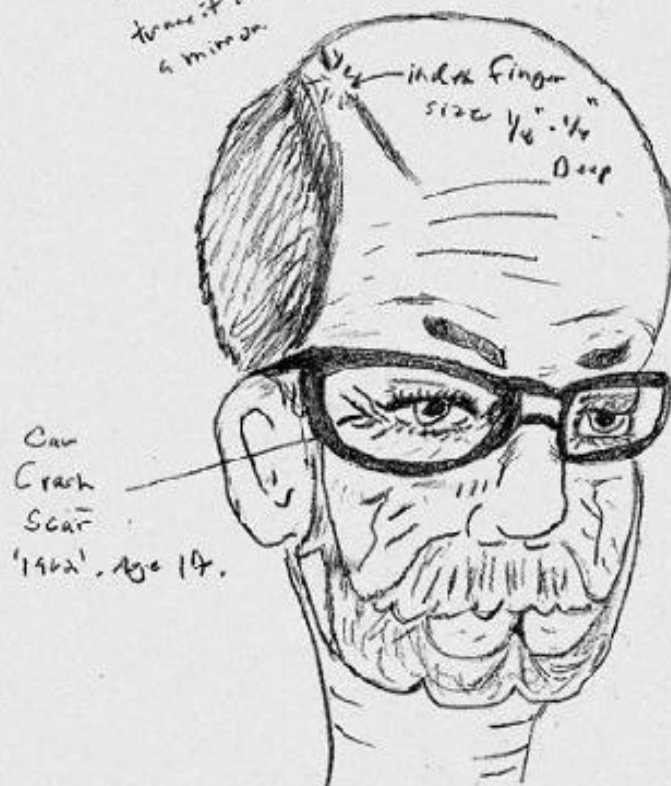
Dennis L. Rader's Head indentations Study.

1/1



The Big Question of Threes!

1. Drop on head as a baby.
2. Mom Fell off horse while "P" with me.
3. Car Crash 1962



Self-Portrait
D.L.R. 3.26.2015
HFF

Rader's self-portrait, drawn to show a ridge on his skull.

College Dream - Cover Story on Time + Hunt

Pyramid 1 (Top):

- Top: 01.15.1994
- Level 1: Rejection (Job Loss)
- Level 2: Career Lapse
- Level 3: "House of Vult" (Factor)
- Level 4: Were with
- Level 5: Hunting
- Level 6: Band / Trip
- Level 7: British Alone
- Level 8: Sexually Fantasy
- Level 9: Social Fiction
- Level 10: Biological
- Level 11: Year
- Level 12: Post Nutrition - Brain Trauma
- Level 13: Prognosis
- Level 14: Schizophrenia
- Level 15: Fantasy
- Level 16: Fantasy
- Level 17: Fantasy
- Level 18: Fantasy
- Level 19: Fantasy
- Level 20: Fantasy
- Level 21: Fantasy
- Level 22: Fantasy
- Level 23: Fantasy
- Level 24: Fantasy
- Level 25: Fantasy
- Level 26: Fantasy
- Level 27: Fantasy
- Level 28: Fantasy
- Level 29: Fantasy
- Level 30: Fantasy
- Level 31: Fantasy
- Level 32: Fantasy
- Level 33: Fantasy
- Level 34: Fantasy
- Level 35: Fantasy
- Level 36: Fantasy
- Level 37: Fantasy
- Level 38: Fantasy
- Level 39: Fantasy
- Level 40: Fantasy
- Level 41: Fantasy
- Level 42: Fantasy
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- Level 98: Fantasy
- Level 99: Fantasy
- Level 100: Fantasy

Pyramid 2 (Middle Left):

- Top: 04.24.1994
- Level 1: 2nd DAY HIT
- Level 2: Time + After College
- Level 3: College
- Level 4: Sexually Fantasy
- Level 5: Hunt
- Level 6: PS's
- Level 7: Next Via
- Level 8: Look & Live
- Level 9: On Controlled
- Level 10: Eruption
- Level 11: 2 year plan
- Level 12: Dike
- Level 13: Social
- Level 14: 300
- Level 15: Day Hit
- Level 16: Spray Book
- Level 17: 300
- Level 18: 300
- Level 19: 300
- Level 20: 300
- Level 21: 300
- Level 22: 300
- Level 23: 300
- Level 24: 300
- Level 25: 300
- Level 26: 300
- Level 27: 300
- Level 28: 300
- Level 29: 300
- Level 30: 300
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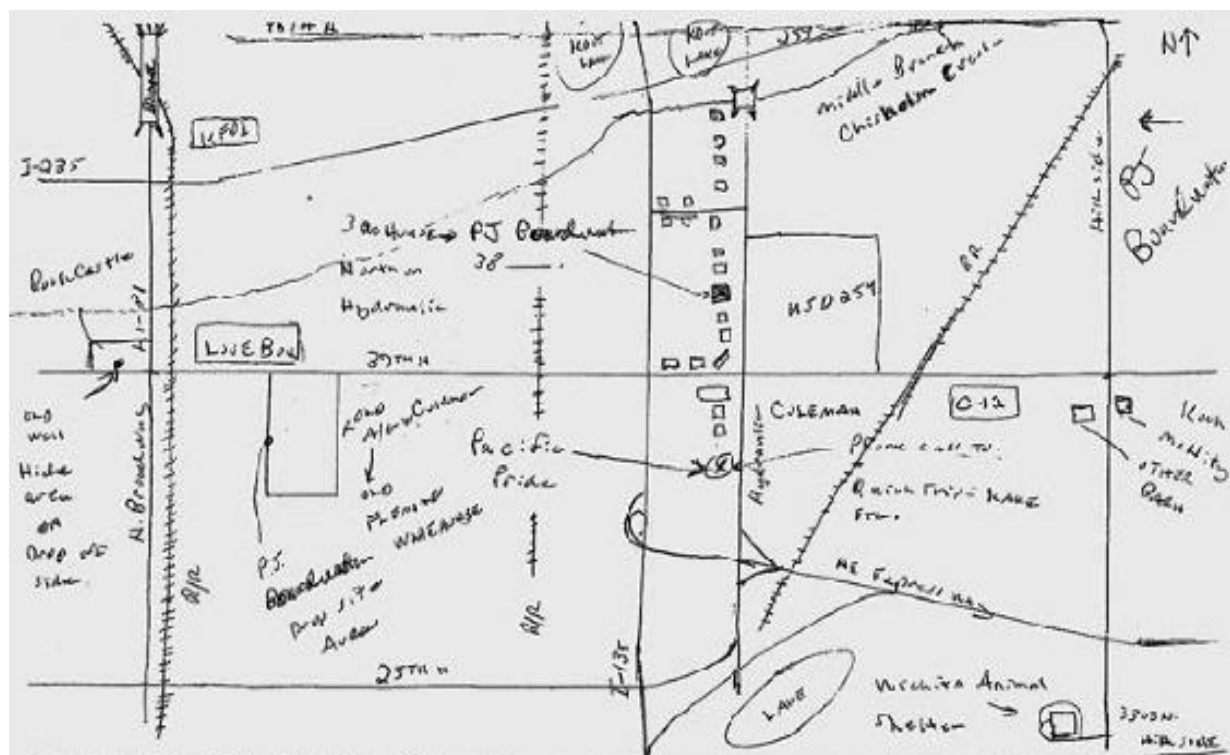
Pyramid 3 (Middle Right):

- Top: 04.17.1994
- Level 1: 2nd DAY HIT
- Level 2: Time + After College
- Level 3: College
- Level 4: Sexually Fantasy
- Level 5: Hunt
- Level 6: PS's
- Level 7: Next Via
- Level 8: Look & Live
- Level 9: On Controlled
- Level 10: Eruption
- Level 11: 2 year plan
- Level 12: Dike
- Level 13: Social
- Level 14: 300
- Level 15: Day Hit
- Level 16: Spray Book
- Level 17: 300
- Level 18: 300
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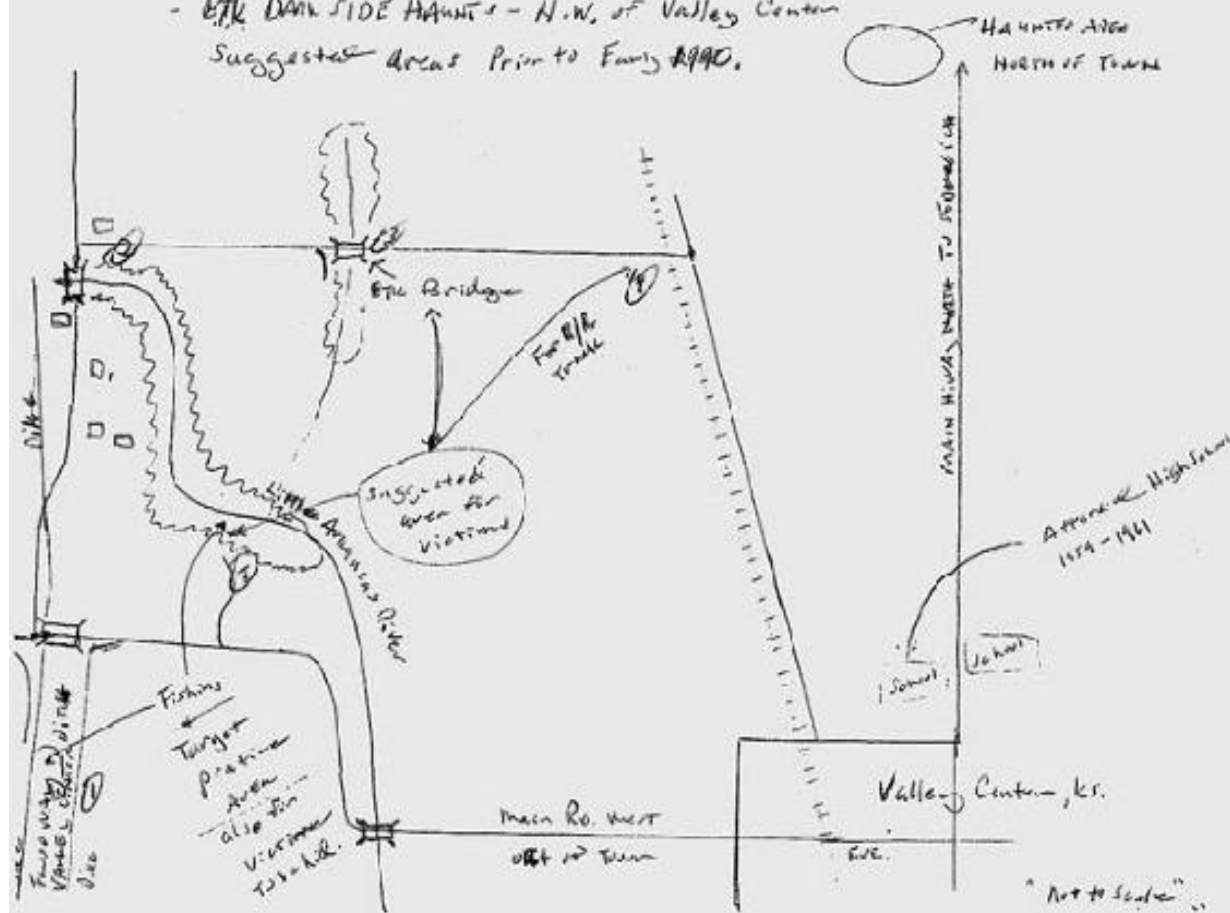
Pyramid 4 (Bottom Left):

- Top: 04.24.1994
- Level 1: 2nd DAY HIT
- Level 2: Time + After College
- Level 3: College
- Level 4: Sexually Fantasy
- Level 5: Hunt
- Level 6: PS's
- Level 7: Next Via
- Level

Rader's hand-drawn life flowchart.



- Elk Dam Side Habitat - N.W. of Valley Center
Suggests areas prior to Farm 1990.



Rader's project map.

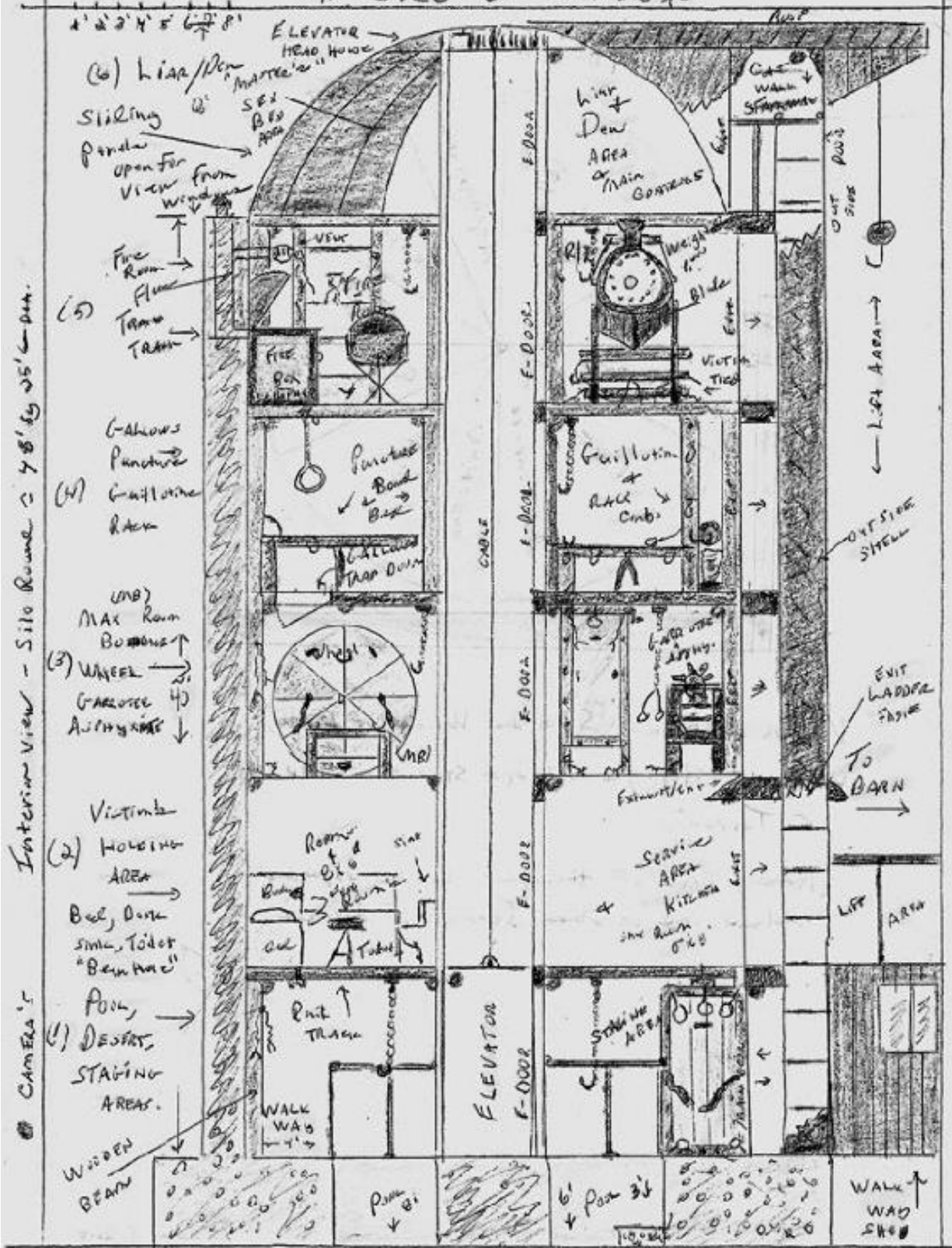
One page from Rader's full project list.

CHAPTER 8									
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13	A M C P R O W L X Q W T Y X	B O R J L Z N F C I O P H N	C A U K E F A N T A S I E S	D S I W O L L O F M R N L T	E D S P O T P V I C T I M E	F D E T A I L S V L T P Q A	G O X H G J M N B D B U E M	H P F G R Y U I S O L I U B	I J G O F O R I T L S L F X
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13	I Q A G S F H L K X	D S U Q W E N R T Y U I	T E L E P H O N E C O A	I A N D E R S O N D T	R S Z T C P F I M	P R D X S H L G H N	A Y F C B O A H C B	D R E C I F F O S J I V	X F G H J K L L D L K W X
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13	R E A L T O R S Q W E X	U I N S U R A N C E R N	S E R V I C E M A N A	E O E F S S E R D O A M	T P M G K T E Z C I G Y	Y F O R S A L E V E N D	U A O H L S O X B K O N	I S E J P L E H N A R A	X D L O S T P E T F W H

The cryptogram in Rader's 2004 communication to police, with Rader's decryption.



Rader's drawing of a "Cave Monster."

 SILO OF TERROR 

D.L.R. 8-2015

Rader's drawing of his imagined silo for the torture of victims.

7 DOUBLE LIVES

You don't understand these things because your not under the influence of factor X. The same thing that made Son of Sam, Jack The Ripper, Havery Glatman, Boston Strangler, Dr. H.H. Holmes Panty Hose Strangler OF Florida, Hillside Strangler, Ted of The West Coast and many more infamous character kill. . . . There is no help, no cure, except death or being caught and put away.

Dennis Rader

Despite Rader's concern about someone recognizing his voice, no one tracked him down. He enjoyed the Christmas of 1977 with his family, giving no thought to the grief and anguish he had caused Nancy Fox's friends and family. She had been nothing more than a pawn in his game. He had a break from classes and had plenty of church activities to keep him busy.

In January, Rader continued to work on his poem about Shirley Vian. He grew careless. "My wife actually found my drafts on 'Shirley Locks.' I was working on them in the living room one evening. She came home, so I quickly stuffed them in the pocket on the easy chair. I forget about them. She later, while cleaning, asked about them. I told her in AJ classes at school we were studying 'BTK' and doing assignments on him. She didn't ask anything else about it."

Rader wrote the completed poem on a 3x5 card, including the BTK initials, and mailed it to the *Wichita Eagle* on January 31, 1978. He was feeling good about having seven successful "hits." Despite all of his errors, he had eluded the police.

But to his surprise, there was no additional coverage of BTK in the news.

He composed another letter, a two-pager. With it, he included another poem and a drawing of a female lying facedown, bound and gagged, the way he had left Nancy Fox. Beside his BTK initials, he had drawn a series of nooses. This letter he sent to a local television station, KAKE-TV. A receptionist opened it on February 10. In the letter, BTK claimed responsibility for the murders of the Oteros, Shirley Vian, Nancy Fox, and another unidentified victim.

The poem was entitled “Oh! Death to Nancy,” a botched version of the lyrics of the American folk song, “Oh Death.”

OH! DEATH TO NANCY

What is this taht I can see
Cold icy hands taking hold of me
for Death has come, you all can see.
Hell has open it,s gate to trick me.
Oh! Death, Oh! Death, can’t you spare me, over for another year!
I’ll stuff your jaws till you can’t talk
I’ll blind your leg’s till you can’t walk
I’ll tie your hands till you can’t make a stand.
And finally I’ll close your eyes so you can’t see
I’ll bring sexual death unto you for me.

Although addressed to the TV station, the letter was likely meant for the police. In it, the author wrote:

I find the newspaper not wirting about the poem on Vain unamusing. A little paragraph would have enough. Iknom it not the news media fault. The Police Cheif he keep things quiet, and doesn’t let the pubbic know there a psycho running around lose strangling mostly women, there 7 in the ground; who will be next?

How many do I have to Kill before I get a name in the paper or some national attention. Do the cop think that all those deaths are not related? Golly-gee, yes the M.O. is different in each, but look a pattern is developing. The victims are tie up-most have been women-phone cut-bring some bondage mater sadist tendencies-no struggle, outside the death spot-no wintness except the Vain’s Kids. They were very lucky; a phone call save them. I was go-ng to tape the boys and put plastics bag over there head like I did Joseph, and Shirley. And then hang the girl. God-oh God what a beautiful sexual relief that would been. Josephine, when I hung her really turn me on; her pleading for mercy then the rope took whole, she helpless; staring at me with wide terror fill eyes the rope getting tighter-tighter. You don’t understand these things because your not under the influence of factor X). The same thing that made Son of Sam, Jack the Ripper, Havery Glatman, Boston Strangler, Dr. H.H. Holmes Panty Hose Strangler OF Florida, Hillside Strangler, Ted of the West Coast and many more infamous character kill. Which seem s senseless, but we cannot help it. There is no help, no cure, except death or being caught and put away. It a terrible nightmarebut, you see I don’t lose any sleep over it. After a thing like Fox I ccome home and go about life like anyone else. And I will be like that until the urge hit me again. It not continuous and I don;t have a lot of time. It take time to set a kill, one mistake and it all over. Since I about blew it on the phone-handwriting is out-letter guide is to long and typewriter can be traced too,. My short poem of death and maybe a drawing;later on real picture and maybe a tape of the sound will come your way. How will you know me. Before a murder or murders you will receive a copy of the initials B.T.K., you keep that copy the original will show up some day on guess who?

May you not be the unluck one!

P.S. How about some name for me, its time: 7 down and many more to go. I like the following How about you?

“THE B.T.K. STRANGLER,” “WICHITA STRANGLER,” “POETIC STRANGLER”
“THE BOND AGE STRANGLER” OR “PSYCHO” THE WICHITA HANGMAN THE
WICHITA EXECUTIONER, “THE GAROTE PHATHOM,” “THE ASPHIXIATER.”

#5 You guess motive and victim.

#6 You found one Shirley Vain lying belly down on a unmade bed in northeast bedroom-hand tied behind back with black tape and cord. Feet & ankles with black tape & legs. Ankles tied to west head of the bed with small off white cord, wrap around legs, hands, arm, finally the neck, many times. A off white plastic bag over her head loop on with a pink nitie was barefooted. She was sick use a glass of water and smoke I or Two cigarette-house a total mess-kids took some toys with them to the bathroom-bed against east bathroom door. Chose at random with some pre-planning. Motive Factor X.

#7 One Nancy Fox-lying belly down on made bed in southwest bedroom-hands tied behind back with red panty hose-feet together with yellow nitie-semi-nude with pink sweater and bra small neckless-glasses on west dresser-panties below butt-many different than the hosiery. She had a smoke and went to the bathroom before the final act-very neat housekeeper & dresser-rifled purse in kitchen-empty paper bag—white coat in living-room- heat up to about 90 degrees, Christmas tree lights on- nities and hose around the room- hose bag of orange color it and hosiery on bed-driver licence gone-seminal stain on or in blue women wear. Chose at random with little pre-planning, Motive Factor 'X.'

#8 Next victim maybe: You will find her hanging with a wire noose-Hands behind back with black tape or cord -feet with tape or cord-gaged- then cord around the body to the neck - hooded maybe- possible seminal stain in anus-or on body. Will be chosen at random. Some pre-planning-Motive Factor "X."

The "Shirley Locks" card was discovered in the *Eagle's* dead letter file and given to police. At the bottom, BTK had promised a future poem on Fox.

"Again I played cat-and-mouse. If you look at the past cat-and-mouse, some of my first page to police, you could see what typewriter I used. Later I used block letters from a child's ABC set. My procedure was first to type up the message. Sometimes I would on purpose mess the words up, or use bad grammar.

"The WSU library [was] a treasure chest of poetry books. I can't tell you which titles I used, but I picked one, and wrote the poem about Nancy Fox. The title, "Oh Death" is close to the real title.

"I had the typewriter in the room I used for my study. I also started using a typewriter at WSU. Since I spent a lot of time there, it was easy, with less problems at home. I also used the Wichita City Library typewriter. None of the two places required ID. Just sign for them and pay a charge, [cost] so much for the usage. I used a different name and scribbled it on their cards.

"I used KAKE TV, for they followed my BTK story fairly well, on the news channels. I liked them the best. Once I started the game, it became addictive. It was a power rush to walk the 'knife edge,' so this made letters like 'Shirley Locks' and later the poem on Nancy Fox and the drawing add to that rush. For the drawing, I used slick ads, the models I liked in books

and magazines, to draw the death scene. Then I photocopied it several times.

“I left Bright out [of this communication], because of Kevin Bright. His description of me in the paper was close to the drawing in the paper on Oteros. Someone had seen me driving away in the Otero’s car. The sadistically wording [of the letter] actually played out more in the mind, yet I have acted that out on victims, more of a sadistic mental or emotional abuse. But bottom line, there’s sexual gratification, a release has to be achieved, whether it from writing a sexy poem, drawing, motel parties, or bondage victims. I do think I bragged a lot, much like Ted Bundy, and used that in the cat-and-mouse game, much like a horror story. There is a rush and excitement in words. (The pull is so strong that Factor X is not really far away, even at age 70.)

“I didn’t actually have a lock on the next victim, but sooner or later, one of the projects would become #8.”

Rader says that the letters and notes show how he lived in a cube: he could be monstrous while also being a good family man, responsible employee, and community leader. “I think people who live in the world of ‘cubes’ are really actors. But actors have personal feelings and strong emotional ties to certain acts. Thus, love for family, for example. It’s not fake.”

INFAMOUS CHARACTERS

Rader had now killed seven people in four separate incidents over a span of four years, from early 1974 to late 1977. Although he did not yet have another target, he had plenty of possibilities.

He went for Project Iron Mountain, in an area of Salina, Kansas, that he knew well from attending Kansas Wesleyan. “It was a high point in a flat area. Boys took girls there to make out. I named my PJs with symbolic names, like people name oil wells, so I remember it quickly.

“This was a BE and attempted hit, out of town on an ADT job. I had spotted the couple leaving the house, and it was an impulsive attempt at a burglary later in the evening. When I was inside, the male entered the house first. His wife or girlfriend was outside visiting neighbors, so I failed. I had my gun drawn and demanded the keys to their vehicle, and I escaped in it. I

had parked the ADT van at a bowling alley a few blocks away. I parked their car nearby and walked to the van and drove to my motel. I hid everything related to the crime in a culvert on Highway 135, including my guns.”

Around the same time was Project Steaks and Ale, near a restaurant by this name. It was northwest of Nancy Fox’s home. “I saw a female who seemed to live alone and who worked late. I cased her place, but lighting was a factor. She met the same standards as Fox. I never made contact and then left that area alone.”

When Rader wrote about being a member of the elite club of serial killers, he included those who had drawn his attention. To learn more about them, he generally shoplifted paperback books or true crime magazines. He learned from them and modeled himself on several.

During this time, Rader read David Franke’s 1975 publication, *The Torture Doctor*, about H. H. Holmes, the devious killer whom he had known previously as “Bluebeard.” The book offered an explicit account of Holmes’ torture rooms, well beyond the true crime account in the magazine Rader had read as a boy. Rader nearly memorized this book, examining the details and figuring out how to exploit Holmes’ MO to get victims completely under his control—for torture, rape, and death. He savored an illustration of Holmes strangling a boy trapped between his knees, the layout of the rooms in the hotel, where unthinkable tortures were performed, as well as Holmes’ full confessions. Franke’s book also included Holmes’ descriptions of himself looking increasingly more like the devil as he sat in his cell. Holmes described a “malformation,” with his face elongating. The details of this horror hotel fed Rader’s fantasy lair more than any other killer’s methods, and even added items he had not envisioned himself.

Rader also was intrigued with Jack the Ripper—not with his MO, but with the fact that the Ripper had never been caught and was now legendary. Sinister and spooky in his anonymity, the Ripper was the most famous of all serial killers. Rader wanted this fate, at the same time that he also wanted people to know, without consequence, that *he* was BTK.

Jack the Ripper’s killing spree had lasted just ten weeks (if the case identifications and linkages are correct). It occurred during the latter half of 1888, in the seedy area of London’s East End, Whitechapel. The attacks came on prostitutes, at night, and with an intense barbarity.

Mary Ann (Polly) Nichols had her throat slashed on August 31. The next victim, Annie Chapman, was found murdered on September 8. Her dress was pulled up over her head, her stomach was ripped open, and her intestines had been pulled out and draped over her left shoulder. Her throat was cut, too, with what appeared to have been a sharp surgical type of knife.

A note that arrived on September 29 raised hopes of a break in the case. Signed, “Yours Truly, Jack the Ripper,” the author claimed that he was “down on whores” and would continue to kill them. If it really was from the Ripper, then he had named himself and also threatened to kill more. He, too, was a terrorist. (Most experts, however, believe this note came from a tabloid journalist.)

On September 30, there were two victims on the same night: Elizabeth Stride and Catherine Eddowes. The throats of both women had been cut, but in Eddowes’ case, the intestines had been pulled out and placed over the right shoulder, the uterus and one kidney cut out and taken, and the face oddly mutilated.

Then came a letter “from Hell” to the head of the Whitechapel vigilante organization, along with a grisly trophy: half of a kidney that turned out to be afflicted with Bright’s disease (a disorder that Eddowes had). The note’s author said he had fried and eaten the rest. In true cat-and-mouse fashion, he signed off with, “Catch me if you can.”

It was the last victim, Mary Kelly, twenty-four, who took the brunt of this murderer’s frenzy. On November 8, she invited the killer into her room. He slashed her throat, then ripped open her lower torso, pulled out her intestines, and cut skin from her chest and legs. He scooped waste from her bowels and spread it over the bed.

Rader enjoyed the Ripper’s taunting letters. Adding his name to the 1978 note demonstrated Rader’s desire to be associated with him. “I read about and studied Jack the Ripper a lot. I mentioned his name in my cat-and-mouse to the police. I had hoped to be symbolized by him—never been caught, disappeared in crime history as a legend.”

Rader also knew about Ted Bundy—calling him “Ted of the West Coast”—although Bundy was still on the run when Rader planned his first round of notes. In fact, Bundy’s capture nearly coincided with the note in which Rader mentioned his name.

In 1975, Utah police had brought Bundy in on the suspicion of burglary. He was soon linked to an attempted kidnapping. The Utah police coordinated with their counterparts in Colorado and Washington State, with the growing awareness that they might be dealing with an interstate serial killer. In Washington and Oregon, more than a half dozen young women had disappeared or been murdered, along with four in Colorado and four in Utah. Witnesses had identified a “Ted” who drove a Volkswagen Beetle, linking him to two murders in a single day.

In Utah, Bundy was found guilty of assault and sentenced but—before he could be tried in Colorado for murder—he escaped. The FBI disseminated Bundy’s information. On February 10, 1978, the agency included him on the list of “Ten Most Wanted.” Five days later, Bundy was caught in Tallahassee, Florida, after killing two coeds and a twelve-year-old girl. Because he was suave and handsome, Bundy became a media fixture. He had lured women with his good looks, charm, and feigned neediness. By all accounts, Bundy looked and acted like a normal person. He presented a disturbing mystery.

“Ted Bundy I followed quite closely,” says Rader. “He sought out younger females—preferred college co-eds. He prowled and traveled and had a hit list. He used a ruse, like me, to lure his victims in. Intelligent, he worked in a crisis center, close to Ann Rule. [He had a] similar parallel with me of helping people, yet he ‘cubed’ into his Dark Path. Me, I helped by being a security expert. If his name would pop up in a book, I would read about him. He was also good at eluding the police, and only due to carelessness did he finally get captured. Also like Ted Bundy, I blew smoke rings at times. TB formed a response to interviews to impress whoever.”

Carlton Gary—Rader’s “Panty Hose Strangler of Florida”—also was arrested in February 1978, in the Georgia neighborhood where a series of rape-murders of elderly women had occurred in 1977. When Rader wrote his letter, this series was still unsolved, as were the murders that began in October 1977, attributed to the Hillside Strangler in Los Angeles, California.

These were fresh events, eagerly covered by news media outlets. Serial killers were unique, scary, and worthy of headlines—something that Rader certainly noticed.

FACTOR X

Serial killers like himself, Rader had written, are motivated by Factor X. When asked to elaborate on this notion, Rader has said many things, including the following:

“‘Factor X.’ I thought hard and deep on this. I wrote in the cat-and-mouse game, very early on, or said ‘Factor X enter my brain, where it came from or how, I don’t know, but it control me.’ Without really thinking or even dwelling on ‘X,’ simply the ‘X’ comes from sex. That is bottom line. Men and women seek sex in different ways. Most do it normally. But, I bet while in the act, they may fantasize, imagine, picture, and invent things with their partner. The whole sex market is fill with objects, toy, books, magazine, S/M [sadoomasochist] themes, sex clubs, you name it, it’s there.

“Many people have their ‘secret closet,’ sex toys or objects, or favorite way of being ‘turned on.’ Many [married] men have their girlfriends, second lives, mistresses, etc. to spice their lives up. [For] some people, the fantasy becomes abnormal, and that relates to the S/M theme. Some like to inflict pain and different forms of distress on the other. Some enjoy mild pain and mild discomfort in the act. So, with me, we now have ‘S,’ no doubt. I can live and honor the White Hat and prefer to do that, and most of my life [I] had followed the ‘Good Guy.’ Yet my secret Black Hat or ‘Dark Side’ can come out when [I’m] sexually aroused. The sadistic theme comes to play. It’s that dominating factor, or control, that seems to radiate.

“So from S-E-X, we have ‘S’ for sadistic or sadoomasochistic, and I also enjoy control, [with] minor pain and [the person being] helpless in the act. I think, like most men, I have rape or mental sex thousands of times upon seeing a female that heighten the thought. Now, the hard porn I never liked it, and I didn’t have any in my collection. Nor kiddie porn. But I did seek nude females, and semi-dressed, or [I would] draw them that way. To men, women with partial attire is more appealing than totally nude. You’ll notice that [even] if they are nude in my drawings, they have ropes, cords, tape, chains or leather somewhere on them.

“‘E’ [from S-E-X] would stand for ‘event.’ The event is the affair, episode, incident, and its results. Now, where did it all come from? Well, ‘sex’ is normal, the one driving force among all living creatures, to produce offspring. You [could] even go beyond that and say the universe has

offspring and continue cosmic 'sex,' [for a] new solar system, stars, planets, moon, etc. They die, and [get] reborn, just like living creatures.

"My theory on abnormal [sex]: if something happened to me, either physically or mentally, it was probably not one but a combo of events. My parents were loving people. They took care of me, never beat or deprived me. We were poor to begin with, but we climbed out of the hole in the late '50s, finally becoming a notch below middle class. Later, my folk had a good 'snowbirds' retirement day and could buy extra nice objects at home and travel. I had a better relationship with my Dad, but yet loved my Mom dearly.

"When I was doing psych[ological] tests for the Air Force, one question popped out. They asked, 'Your Greatest Love is:' I wrote 'Mom' down. Probably 'Country' was what they wanted to see, but I did get a secret clearance. Dad never spanked us kids. Mom did sometimes. She used a switch. Those really hurt, and we [would] run and hide. The chase was on, making Mom madder.

"We were at our grandparents' farm a lot. Grandma Cook would turn [discipline] matters over to Grandpa Cook. He had a razor strap, but he never used it on me. His voice and manner were all that was needed. Like with my teachers and others, I had too much respect to 'break the law' or their 'law' on the farm. My mom told me of the strap, and even my cousin Larry told of it.

"Now, on the Raders' side, Grandma Rader used a switch, never on me, but some of my cousins and brothers got it. Dad told me he had the switch at times. Grandpa Rader used his voice and demeanor, like my Dad.

"I didn't run with the wrong kids, but did sometimes run with the 'toughies,' and a few friends [were] just a notch below the law. Most of that came out in high school. I had a Christian upbringing. I never used profanity, did not take drugs, no weed or 'Sweet Mary,' only drank socially (and heavy in my Air Force days). I married a Christian, raised my kids Christian, my folks were always Christian, I had respect for the law and police. Yet I turned 'Dark'!

"I guess I'll leave that to the experts to solve the 'X' mystery, or at least to shed light on the subject. One thing for the record: Paula and I had normal sex. There were no toys or anything like that. I never asked her to do bondage. It was just a good love between us. But what I wrote here speaks of my fantasy, which may have helped me achieve an orgasm.

“The other thing to reflect on: the arousal doesn’t have to be [with] humans. It could be [with] an animal, a doll or mannequin, pictures, my slick-ads or bondage drawings, or with devices that are made for bondage. (I might do something with mannequins in a back room if I were installing an alarm in a business that had them.)

“If you recall in the movie, *In Cold Blood*, they were shopping for restraints, tape, rope, that sort of stuff in a store. It drove me crazy. I had shopping sprees where I bought cord, tape, rope, nuts and bolts, metal pipes, chains, wooden dowels, and things to build simple homemade bondage devices for me to use on myself. Oh, yes, plastic and leather belts, or women’s pantyhose were big items for me. I even made ‘ball-gags’ after reading about a Minotaur who had used ping pong balls as gags (and carried one or two in a hit kit). Once [I made] a mask, or used masks in my ‘motel parties’ [solo self-gratification rituals at motels when his job sent him out of town]. The excitement of buying and building them, and trying them out, led to good orgasms.

“It’s easy to say that something besides my conscious self caused the dark side. Job loss, boredom, the Factor X was so strong. The acts were often fueled by traveling alone. It was a dormant volcano. I prayed many times, asking for help and trying to answer the ultimate question, why me? I had studied serial killers and I know that unfortunately, I was one. Christian or not, it was there.”

8 FACTORS X

There were many attempted hits. I went to their home and it didn't work out.

Dennis Rader

This is the story that was publicized at the time: Wichita had a local serial killer on the loose who had murdered seven people, declared his presence, and threatened to kill more. He entered homes on a whim. The police urged residents to lock their windows and doors, and watch for strangers in their neighborhoods. This guy was a stalker; he was careful and crafty but would seem ordinary. No one knew where he would strike next and the police did not know how to stop him. The tips rolled in about every suspicious neighbor or spouse. None panned out.

The police had three communications from him, including one from 1974, but nothing more appeared in 1978.

Rader was busy pondering projects. "A woman told me that at one time a man had broken into her home, had placed rope, tape, a knife and cords on her bed, but for some reason, he left before she got there. She found those items and told the police. I thought if she became a PJ, I would become the second 'boogie man' to come for her. This appealed to me. I saw that the alarm connection under the house, or 'hot wire,' would have been difficult to get to but not impossible. I could disable the system and be inside, waiting for her. But I didn't do it."

He could easily get into and out of a home, taking items that no one would miss, including female underwear that he planned to use during his bondage sessions.

"I believe that early 'Disneyland' [indulgence in self gratification] grew into unquenchable habit. My hunts and naming the PJs added a spy-type persona. I had codes and a cover story. Living two lives became very normal, White Hat and Black Hat. My art moved into bondage drawings, something I could keep, review and collect. Later, I added Slick Ads and 3"x5"cards, building [a collection of] 'Fantasy Slick Ad Women.' I had an addiction to women's magazines. [In my fantasies] I thought of myself as a hero."

He had a few more projects that failed to work out.

“There was PJ Waco in 1978 or 79, an attempt on a lady in a corner house. She started to come through the front door. I grabbed for her, but she pushed back and screamed, and I was out of there. I retreated fast and hid my hit items, so no one would find them on me. I later came back for them. I tried the door of PJ Delano several times, but she had a questionable routine. Another one like that was PJ West Lincoln, and it was also too far to drive to for trolling properly. PJ Crest, near the Crest Theater, offered that parking lot for my car. I watched the house, but it was difficult to figure out the routine. I had quite a few projects in other cities as well: Newton, Topeka, Manhattan, Dodge City, Pittsburg, Great Bend. Wherever I had out of town jobs, I had potential projects.”

In reality, many of his crimes were mundane. “A petty thief at times I was. Once or twice, I took money from the church. Occasionally, if I saw a paperback about a serial killer or murder thriller, I would shoplift it, or if I needed an item for my hit kit, I would take it. At one time, while installing a security camera at Leeker’s [a freelance job], I borrowed some D-rated videos to view and download some sexually fantasies for me. Later, I returned them to the video bins, wiped clean. I did not want people to have a vile list of what movies I checked out. But I did not really like pornography. I [preferred] the slick ads.”

Rader watched female neighbors and dressed up in female clothing, often performing autoerotic asphyxiation with a rope. When Paula was away, he felt safe to indulge. He would dress in a woman’s slip to play the role of a victim. He was looking at himself in a mirror in his bondage contraption one day when Paula unexpectedly came home to pick something up.

“A very personal matter [happened] between Paula and me. She caught me in bondage at home. She was very angry.

“I had spare time on my hands. I favored the hallway and bathroom areas for doing this. I liked the full shower mirror, so I could see. I rigged up a chair, and ropes, and even had a remote way to work the camera to catch pictures.

“When she came home, I had quite a few items out, and there was no way to clean up fast. I was in the southwest bedroom, watching a female neighbor across the street. She wore a tank top and she was tan and trim. I’d

had many sexually fantasies about her. I had some bondage items on. Paula was upset when she saw me, but she seemed to think things out.

“She called or visited a professional at the VA, where she once had worked. While she did her calls and thinking, we were not on the best wife and husband terms. She was also worried about our children and the potential harm to them from my behavior. That was her biggest concern.

“I think after she called and talked to the professional and read a [self-help] book, something along the lines of *Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Sex*, she seemed to be more understanding. Paula kept her book in her own Hidey Hole. I found it one day while cleaning. She had marked a chapter in it about bondage, S&M, etc. I think this helped her understand me.”

Talk of separating receded. Paula did not want to alarm the children or to cause any talk at church. They were prominent in the congregation. Paula did not like what she had learned about her husband, but she adjusted. “She seemed to accept it. We didn’t talk about it.”

The Raders’ second child, Kerri Lynn, was born on June 13, 1978, in the morning. “She was a delight to the world,” said Rader, “and to Paula, for now she had a girl. A daughter she could share her life with. I was overjoyed to be a proud dad of a healthy boy and now a healthy girl.”

He began to ponder whether he should get help for his dark-side issues. “I watched a movie or TV show. The male actor started as a doctor. He was a lot like me, and had this dark secret. He either was trying to quit or he knew the police were closing in on him, so he turned himself into a psych ward and acted insane. I thought about this as well; once removed in a ward, I thought I might be safe from the police and from more victims, and also save face for my family.”

But his interest in bondage was much stronger than his desire to stop. He was busy with a new baby for a while, but he continued to prowl. In one neighborhood, he spotted homes near a Dairy Queen with large front porches and basement windows that would provide easy access for a knowledgeable BE man. “They had good backyards to prowl.” PJ Dairy Queen, however, was a failure. Undeterred, Rader kept looking. “I was always prowling and working up projects.”

KILLERS IN THE NEWS

Rader stayed attuned as the news media followed the stories of other prominent serial killers, especially those who had strangled or bound their victims.

Ted Bundy, facing two trials in Florida, was preparing to represent himself, and he loved telling reporters that he was confident he would win. His flamboyance made him a media darling and affirmed for Rader the larger-than-life attributes they shared. Then, a serial killer in Des Plaines, Illinois (near Chicago), shocked the world.

As 1978 came to a close, Chicago police began surveillance on a man they believed had abducted an adolescent boy. (The boy was still missing.) When an officer smelled decomposition at the house, a warrant was quickly issued. Prominent businessman John Wayne Gacy evidently had secrets. While he volunteered as a clown for children in the hospital and ran a busy contracting business, he also was associated with numerous reports of missing boys and young men. He had hired many of them for temporary work and, when they went missing, had assured investigators that they'd been fine the last time he saw them.

As forensic investigators explored the crawl space beneath Gacy's ranch-style home, they found commingled human remains: some fresh, others badly decomposed. At one time, Gacy had lived in this house with his mother and his wife. Even then, there had been bodies rotting beneath the floorboards, but Gacy had offered logical explanations for the odors.

Like some other serial killers, Gacy used a ruse to lure his victims, posing at times as a police officer to get them into the car. The final victim count was thirty-three: twenty-eight bodies on the property and five thrown into the Des Plaines River (because Gacy ran out of space). He liked to bind his victims, put handcuffs on them, and strangle them.

Rader read the reports: "Murders in Chicago have always held my interest. First, my Grandma Cook told me about her great grandmother in the fire. I had visited Chicago and I watched the TV shows and movies of Chicago mob days, like *The Untouchables*. Also, [I read about] the Castle and Bluebeard. I believe that John Wayne Gacy was after young males, but the bondage he did to them attracted me, and how he tried to hide the bodies. His clown outfit and pleasing people also was an interest. Another ruse, his construction work, [was] much like Bluebeard. He used a job or title to get closer to his victims. Many of the victims worked for him. I often wondered if any became enclosed in a brick wall or under the concrete

floor! And again, he strove to help his community as a minor leader. Like me.”

Early in 1979, the Hillside Stranglers also were identified. Nine murders in 1977 had been linked to them, and one in early 1978. When two girls were murdered in January 1979 in Bellingham, Washington, their supervisor at a security company, Kenneth Bianchi, was arrested. A good-looking man with a girlfriend and infant son, Bianchi flipped on his cousin in Los Angeles, Angelo Buono, to get a better deal for himself. Apparently, they had enjoyed the torture and murder of these women.

Rader “followed their stories and cases with interest. I even bought a book of them and bought one of those newspaper magazines that come out as exclusives, which they place in the magazine racks. I kept it in my Hidey Hole to read again. I recall the time they tied up a girl in their car shop, using upholstery to gag her, and duct tape.”

Rader claims that, while these other killers intrigued and excited him, “I did not idolize Minotaurs, and not all of them interested me. If a Hall of Minotaurs was set up, it would include the ones I would most seek out [who used similar methods to him], mainly to see what makes them tick: were there some things in their early past that started them on their dark path? Due to my sexually excitement, their MOS are the ‘cookie jar’ and ‘hot chocolate chip cookie, fresh baked.’ Reading about them is like reading a sexy novel. I try not to do that.” But he did enjoy seeing the parallels, especially between himself and other killers who had posed as community leaders or helpers. He immersed himself in these narratives, reinforcing his own “cubed” identity.

When a true crime narrative was published about Carlton Gary (Georgia’s Stocking Strangler), Rader grabbed it. “I had a *Reader’s Digest* article on him, my reading material in bed. I reread it occasionally at night before retiring, while Paula slept peacefully beside me. I dreamed fantasies as I drifted to sleep. He was bright, creative, attractive to younger women, and yet he hunted older females.”

In addition, Rader found a book about 1940s British killer Neville Heath, who liked to tie up and torture his victims. Heath had also used a ruse and tried to pass as normal.

On June 20, 1946, Margery Gardner was bound, whipped, mutilated, and suffocated in a room at the Pembroke Court Hotel. It appeared that her killer had licked blood from her face. A man named Neville Heath had

signed the hotel register, so police looked for him, but he had gone to a distant town. There, he posed as a war hero (a ruse that Rader appreciated) to twenty-one-year-old Doreen Marshall, escorting her for a stroll. Five days later, her nude body was found in some bushes, cut up and sexually violated.

Oddly enough, Heath offered assistance to the police. When questioned, he feigned innocence in the assault on Doreen Marshall and denied that his name was Neville Heath. Upon searching his belongings, however, the police found a braided whip that matched wound patterns on Gardner. Blood on a scarf in his possession matched her blood type. A handkerchief, tied into a gag, turned up in his hotel room, as did hair strands that matched Marshall's. Further investigation into his personal history turned up several incidents of sadistic behavior with women.

During his trial for murder, Heath hoped to use an insanity defense, but he was found guilty and sentenced to be executed.

CASE NO. 05CR498

On April 28, 1979, Anna Williams, sixty-three, came home around 11 p.m. to 615 South Pinecrest to find that someone had been in her house and had gone through her personal things. Her phone line was cut. Police discovered that the intruder had entered through a basement window. Clothes and a wire were found next to the bed, and some jewelry and money were missing. They had no leads until June 15, when Ms. Williams received a collection of items in the mail, addressed to her deceased husband. The package was opened by her daughter: a photocopied poem; a drawing of a bound, nude, sexually violated woman with her hands and feet tied to a pole; Williams' own stolen scarf; and a piece of her stolen jewelry. The poem, originally addressed to "Louis," read:

OH, ANNA WHY DIDN'T YOU APPEAR

T' was perfect plan of deviant pleasure so bold on that Spring nite
My inner felling hot with propension of the new awakening season

Warn, wet with inner fear and rapture, my pleasure of entanglement,
like new vines so tight
Oh, A—, Why Didn't You Appear
Drop of fear fresh Spring rain would roll down from your nakedness to
scent to lofty fever that burns within,
In that small world of longing, fear, rapture, and desperation, the
games we play, fall on devil ears.
Fantasy spring forth, mounts, to storm fury, then winter clam at the
end.
Oh, A—Why Didn't You Appear
Alone, now in another time span I lay with sweet enrapture garments
across most private thought
Bed of Spring moist grass, clean before the sun, enslaved with control,
warm wind scenting the
air, sun light sparkle tears in eyes so deep and clear.
Alone again I trod in pass memory of mirrors, and ponder why you
number eight was not.
Oh, A—Why Didn't You Appear

The police learned that a similar envelope had been sent to KAKE-TV, collected the day before at 4 a.m. from a white male, around five-foot-eight and thirty years old, who had handed it to a postal clerk and told her to put it in the box for KAKE. It contained copies of the poem and drawing sent to Ms. Williams and a few items taken from her home. The paper on which the poem was copied featured a stylized BTK symbol: a B turned on its side, rounded part down, provocatively conjoined with a T and a K.

PJ PINE CONE

Rader would eventually take credit for the crime. “Much like BH #7, I hid the items [I took] in a Hidey Hole, away from home. I took my time to assemble the packages. In April, I would have still been at WSU, with night classes as an excuse to get out. I would prowl or troll nearby neighborhoods after classes. I did a lot of ‘studies’ at the library. Although Anna was 63,

referring to 3s, actually her granddaughter, Rebecca, 24, was the target. It was her I saw once at the house during my prowling. But, it is a funny coincidence that the “3” should pop up. That can’t be planned. It just happened!

“Part of my BE is to take items, such as jewelry and clothes. I also cut the phone line, my trademark! I used tape on the window [where I broke in] and perhaps a glass cutter, which I now carried in my BE kit. Since the house was dark when I came, I thought perhaps she was asleep. Further, I saw a car in the garage. So, I tried a ‘cat burglar’ approach, going through the basement window. But the house was empty.

“The clothes and wire were for the victim, which I laid out or beside the bed. I also scribbled something on the bathroom mirror, but that is not in the report. I supposed they missed it. I don’t recall exactly what it was, but something like ‘BTK was here’ or ‘mirror, mirror on the wall.’ I might have been thinking about the ‘Lipstick Minotaur’ that I’d heard of [William Heirens, who scribbled with lipstick a plea to be caught]. I used lipstick I found there to write it. (After drinking too much, I sometimes scribbled in men’s bathroom’s ‘BTK was here’ in very small print.)

“I photocopied all of my cat-and-mouse paperwork. I took a similar package to the post office and had it weighed, so I would have the right postage. There was some write-up of me mailing the packages boldly right [in front of] the postal clerk, but that’s not true. I did not do that. I wasn’t the person the clerk remembered. This happened before all of the bomb scares; you could drop a package [with the right postage] off in a mailbox, no questions asked. I had them weighed, then applied stamps later on, and then mailed them. No one saw me. Not knowing the true ID of the person or persons living there, I believe I looked up their name and address in a cross directory I found at the city library. I used these directories for prowling and trolling checks, and sometimes for phone calls. I had no way of knowing the girl I saw was not Anna, or that the husband was deceased. If he had been there in the home [when I entered], there would have been no Kevin Bright this time. I would have tied him with a strong cord, taped a plastic bag on his head, or shot him, after the female bound and secured. I would not make that mistake again.

“I also mailed the package to my favorite news source, KAKE-TV. I grew up in the 1950s, so I saw a lot of programs on KAKE-TV, Kakeland, like

Westerns and programs to catch the after-school kids' attention. Later, I was sexually attracted to Susan Peters, an anchor."

Rader was unhappy to have failed projects, especially those that came so close to succeeding. Only Rader's time constraints had saved Anna Williams. Even though she was not the young woman he had in mind, he would have completed Pine Cone.

Detectives who noticed that most of the communications had been photocopied enlisted the Xerox Corporation to help pinpoint the machine that the killer had used. Rader carefully followed the media reports on this story. He would switch tactics, if necessary. He had copy machines at several locations.

Around this same time, just after the failed project and before sending the poem, Rader graduated from WSU with a bachelor's degree in the Administration of Justice. This resulted in the loss of his cover story for being out late in the evenings. "I graduated in May 1979, and it was easy to slip back into the Christian world. The kids were growing like weeds, and a head of the household was needed. Paula needed to be home, so all responsibility landed on me. I had no time to be away from home. Being busy with the family kept the dark side at bay. The next year, we got a pet dog, Patches, a Brittany Spaniel. I built a fence in the back yard, did a lot of gardening, and enjoyed life with my wife and two kids. The job with ADT gave me opportunities to be out of town, staying in motel rooms, so I would take the bondage items with me, or shop for new ones at the town where I was doing a job."

But Rader again risked exposure.

"A second time when Paula came home, I was in full bondage in the hallway [in a slip, with a rope]. I tried to hide it in the bathroom, but there was too much out to hide. She exploded into a fury. I cleaned the mess up and told her I would leave. I was so embarrassed and ashamed. I slept a day or two in the living room. She was thinking about what to do. We didn't talk, only small talk in front of the kids. She finally told me that if she ever caught me again, she would file for divorce and I would have to leave the house for good. I understood. I vowed I would never do this at home again."

Rader had lost a part of his power to a woman. He disliked the humiliation and disruption.

“We finally came back to our good relationship. As for me, I quit the hard-core bondage in the house. But in time, the impulse to continue was too strong, so I designed a place in the attached shed for bondage and [kept my items] under the house. Plus, I updated my Hidey Hole, the one in the hallway—with a false bottom. Whatever ‘big bondage’ I did was off my property. I never did it again full bore at home. It was too risky.”

Part of Rader’s “Factor X” involves reflex fraud. Some people, because of their deep fear of loss of control, construct layers of stabilizing deceptions. Lies become a defensive strategy and feel better to them. Initially, they feel proud when their lies succeed. With this comes a smug sense of superiority. Eventually, they can lie quickly, elaborately, and convincingly. They value truth less than their personal needs. Truth and lies are both merely tools.

Only with the awareness of serious consequences—for Rader, divorce, public humiliation, the loss of full access to his children—might such people grasp how they have hurt others, but some can never relinquish the inner rewards that their lies yield. Reflex fraud is entrenched in the liar’s sense of identity. Rader assured Paula that he would change, but the only thing he changed was the location of his self-gratification.

“These [incidents] were perfect times to seek professional help, I know, but I don’t recall if Paula asked me to do anything like this. Maybe she did and I told her I would work it out. [Another source says Paula gave him self-help books to read.] Now after all these years, I believe I really should have gone to someone. Many families have secrets, I guess. Both of us could have used that ‘secret.’ But I thought if I told someone about the other things I was doing [in order to *really* get help], they would be obligated to tell the police.

“I wonder if, after I was arrested, Paula told the police about these incidents. I’ll bet she did tell the professional that helped her after I was arrested. I feel terrible that she had to endure all I caused.”

TRANSITIONS

“In 1981, just as Brian started grade school, ADT got computerized. I was sent to New York City and New Jersey to learn the changeover and leadership role for the company. I was tempted to try some projects when I

traveled. When I would get to the hotel in these towns, I would get out and walk and see the neighborhoods. I was always on the hunt, always thinking about it. But I didn't stay long enough to prepare. I looked at some places that presented opportunities if I came back."

Instead, Rader found places out in the countryside. "I have at times done bondage outside, sometimes under bridges. I enjoyed the hike to a secluded area. Once I dressed in lingerie to indulge outside and I got a sunburn that showed where the bra straps had been. It was difficult to hide it from Paula until it cleared up.

"At times, I used a pulley or hoist to lift me up upside down. I have pictures of this. Northeast of Park City, a farm had a section of wheat fields and other crops, with a wooded area where I hunted squirrels. In this wooded area was an old boxcar, like the one in my grandparents' barn. It was leftover from an old farmstead. The boxcar drew me to it. I felt the feeling from times when I had practiced bondage in one like it, and fantasized about victims in it. The farmstead had an old well, which I imagined as a good place to drop off victims, after they were dead. This feeling seemed most powerful during the sunny warm days of fall, as I hunted squirrels alone with my beloved .22. I loved the sounds of early fall, the stir of leaves. In this area, I was a lone wolf. That's how it felt."

Although he took trophies, presumably as reminders, Rader says he did not think a lot about his victims. "Occasionally, they were reminders, but it was not an overly thought out process. If I had any deep thoughts about them, it happened most often at 'motel parties.' At that time [in motel rooms], I reviewed what items I had from my Hidey Holes. I looked at the newspaper clippings about the hits, at the driver's licenses, any photos I had taken, and their personal items. I did have Otero's watch for a while, and the radio, but they didn't really bring back the incident. They were just something I could use. During anniversaries, especially if the news played it up, I often got rid of [a] victim's items.

"Now, Fox had some nice feminine underclothes. Her slips I favored. I had some underpants from Vian, and clothes from BES or PJs that had not worked into successful hits. Like with the holidays, I might occasionally think about them, and as that day [anniversary] came closer, I thought more and more about it. At a motel party, I might wear some of the underclothes as I [would] do bondage, relating their terror into my mind, [as I was] tied up, gagged, with plastic bag, and in the end, self-gratification. I did take

pictures of me in their clothes and added that to the Hidey Hole stash. Once the 'holiday' over, it all got boxed up and put away. In a way, [it was] most exciting to leave [these items] alone and renew [my memories only] occasionally."

In 1983, Brian joined the Cub Scouts and Rader became a Scout leader. "This was a White Hat activity," as was his participation in church events with Paula. Such activities helped him to affirm to himself that he was, fundamentally, a good person. "It was not until 1984 that Factor X rose again."

9 THE KILLER NEXT DOOR

A release has to be achieved.

Dennis Rader

In 1984, as investigators marked the tenth anniversary of the Otero murders, they could only wonder if BTK had been arrested for something else, left the area, or died. The received wisdom on serial killers was that they would not simply stop killing. This seemed especially true considering how BTK had described himself. A new task force went systematically through the files to see if there was any item they had overlooked, anything that could produce a lead.

Men were asked for blood samples and numerous suspects were eliminated. That October, several FBI profilers looked at the crime scenes and letters, then offered a detailed portrait. The killer was sadistic, controlling, and superficial. He read detective magazines and pornography, enjoyed S&M practices with a partner, and liked to drive around. He was a lone wolf type. His car would be ordinary. He was probably in his mid-thirties. He would live within a few-mile radius of the crime scenes and probably had known one or more of the Oteros. He would do well in his job, which would allow him to wear a uniform, but would stay only temporarily employed. He probably had military training and an interest in law enforcement, and he carried weapons. Others would notice that he was critical of the cops and the investigation.

Nothing in this profile assisted investigators, aside from reminding them to look for detective magazines, should they have reason to search a home.

Rader still prowled and fantasized about projects, but he had learned to keep busy and indulge his fantasies privately as a way to control his compulsions. He considered several hits at this time but did not follow through.

Rader tossed the gun he had used on Kevin Bright into a creek, just to ensure that the Bright crime could never be traced to him. He moved his drawings and journal into another secret place. He reassured himself that he

was still the dark “Minotaur” he believed himself to be, but lived easily as two distinctly different people. He could feed the “monster” without compromising his family, as long as he kept each side “cubed.”

But then temptation came dangerously close.

Rader had noticed a neighbor, Marine Hedge, a fifty-three-year-old woman who lived just down the street and “often gave a friendly wave.” She lived alone and was just the right size. “I thought about what her neck would look like with a rope around it.” She had a male friend who often came over, but he did not pose a threat. It was time, Rader thought, to re-energize his secret identity. “It had been a long time from the last time Factor X exploded in my world,” he wrote, “and shatter someone else’s.”

He knew that targeting someone so close to home was a bold move. It ran counter to Rader’s own rules of how to be a successful serial killer. But the challenge excited him. He had read about how investigators tried to anticipate a serial killer’s next move, based on his MO and routines. He decided to change his routine, while ensuring that he could get the photos he wanted of a bound, naked woman. “BH #8 was complicated. It was planned out almost to the T. Yet you never know how things will go.”

CASE NO. 05CR498

Marine Hedge, fifty-three, failed to show up for work at the coffee shop at Wesley Medical Center on April 27, 1985. This was out of character. A concerned associate contacted her son, who went to her home at 6254 Independence in Park City. Her car was gone. The son was not yet worried. However, the next day, when his mother was still not at home or work, he called the police. They found her phone line cut. Working up a timeline, investigators talked with a male friend who said he had been out with her on April 26, leaving her home around 1 a.m. He was apparently the last one to have seen her alive.

On May 2, the missing car was found, locked, in a shopping center at 21st and Woodlawn. It had been there since April 27. It was muddy but partly wiped clean. Inside were two bedcovers, a purple bedspread, a tan curtain, and an electric blanket. Marine Hedge’s purse was found the next day, at 37th and 143rd. Finally, the body was found in a ditch near Webb and 53rd North, covered with grass, twigs, and a

small tree. Nearby was a dog's corpse and a pair of knotted pantyhose. Marine Hedge had been strangled.

Despite the cut phone line, there was no obvious connection to BTK. He had left his victims in the house, lying where they were killed. Hedge's male friend became the chief suspect.

PROJECT COOKIE

Rader heard the neighborhood gossip about Hedge's friend. "I tried to minimize the suspicion of him," he said. But he was secretly satisfied at his success. Again.

"I called it Project 'Cookie' and 'De Flower.' She was a home-type person and worked in coffee shop, so 'Cookie.' Also, her house was a cookie-cutter type of house. Her address had a '6,' which refers to 3s. 'De Flower' was due to her liking to grow flowers in her garden. We'd walk by and wave. She liked to work in her yard as well as I liked to work, and it's just a neighborly thing.

"In my 'prowl and troll' stage, I was always looking. One night as I was retiring, looking out my front window, I noticed her arrive home. At that time, I did not know her work hours. I checked again on several nights until I noted a routine. Doing follow up on her, I found out where she worked, so I knew how far she traveled to and from work. She didn't have a dog. The prowl/troll stage was over. Then the homing began of 'stalking and planning.'

"When I cut the line, the police should have thought about this being related to BTK, but they didn't. That was my trademark!

"Breaking my own rules sort of gave me a rush. I lived on the 'knife edge' for a long time with this, following newspaper, TV, or neighbor talk. By reading other cases, I knew this was a high gamble. To me, Hedge took a lot of thinking and planning. This was the first time I [had] decided to use the Boy Scouts as my cover."

This is how Rader described his eighth murder. The target day arrived, April 26. He went to the Scout camp, where he typically helped to set things up. "That day, I parked up on the hill off the roadside near the camp,

so I could leave and come back unnoticed. I had my hit kit in a bowling bag I had bought at a garage sale. I'd kept it in my work shed."

He told the boys and other leaders that he had a headache and wanted to retire early. Then he went to his car, drove away, changed from his Scout uniform into regular clothes, and prepared his "hit kit." Parking at a bowling alley on Woodlawn and 21st, he went inside and ordered a beer.

"In the bowling alley, I pretended to be a bowler. At one point, some people I knew from Park City came in. I had to stay away from their sight, for I think they were part of the Scouting program or members of my church. I was getting good at play-acting, and was quick to invent on-the-spot ruses.

"I went there under the pretense of bowling. I called a taxi to come and take me out to Park City. I took some beer and washed it around my mouth and splashed some on my face for a ruse that I was too drunk to drive, and the guy could probably smell alcohol on me. When we approached my neighborhood, I told him to let me out so I could get some fresh air, and I walked from where the taxi let me off over to her house. I was on West Parkview, one block away.

"Behind my house at 6220 Independence and her home was a small park [for mobile homes]. A creek ran through it, by my place. To gain access and keep away from the park's lighted entrance, I used my in-laws' yard. They only lived a few houses north of my place. I was going to have sexual fantasies, so I brought my hit kit, and lo and behold, her car was there! I thought gee, she's not supposed to be home. But the house was dark. I could not turn back because I needed the car to get back to the bowling alley, where my car was. I had a back-up plan. I had an old bike, and could have biked back to the bowling alley, but it would have been a long ride in the dark.

"So I cut the phone line and very carefully snuck into the house, kind of like a cat burglar. That takes a long time. You can't make noise getting in or on stairs." Knowing that Hedge's house was similar in layout to his, he was confident of where he could enter.

"About the time I reached her bedroom and discovered she was not home, I heard a car door slam, and voices. She had those [hanging] beads at the entrance of her hallway. I rushed through them. They were moving as she and her friend started to enter. I quickly tried to stop that movement so

she wouldn't notice, and moved to the southeast bedroom/spare room closet. I hid there."

The man stayed for a while and then left. Rader was relieved. "They were there for maybe an hour or so. It was a long time."

He recalled the Bright incident and didn't want a repeat. If he ever confronted a male again, he'd decided, he would end it quickly.

"If he had not left, and probably went to bed with her, I would have flipped on the bedroom light, held them at gunpoint, handcuffed him, tied his feet, and gagged him. I would then have bound her and moved her to another room. I'd return and use a pillow or plastic bag and cord on him, to be quiet to MH's ears. She knew me, but I would have had the mask on. But she might have recognized my voice, so with an altered voice, I probably [would have] strangled her. Then, with no fears of someone coming by early in the morning, I would do the bondage and pictures, or remove her to the church as originally planned.

"Upon investigation, they would find one murdered male and a missing MH and car. The problem with this [was that] the KBI would be called in and a real investigation started. I don't think the Park City police were very good at cops. Hometown boys. So in theory, I should remove both of them as hostages and later kill them [away] from the house area and hide their bodies. But could I control two people in the dark?

"It was a long wait. My timeframe clock [was] running down. Then he left."

Marine Hedge went to bed.

"I waited till the wee hours of the morning. I then proceeded to sneak into her bedroom. She didn't wake up. I flipped the lights on in the bathroom. She woke up and screamed, and I jumped on the bed and strangled her manually. She tried to fight, but she was no match. I would have taken her out of the house alive, gagged and in handcuffs if I could have, but things didn't work out that way. The goal was to get pictures.

"After that, since I was in the sexual fantasy, I went ahead and stripped her and tied her up. I put handcuffs on. I put her on a blanket and went through her purse. I needed the car key and took some personal items in the house while I figured out how I was gonna get her out of there. I went to the kitchen and got a glass of water, also my trademark. I carefully wiped it clean and put it back. Eventually, I moved her to the trunk of the car."

During his post-arrest interview—right after he’d described strangling Hedge—Rader told police, “I think I’m a pretty nice guy. You know, I raised a family, and kids. But there’s a mean streak in me. There has to be for me to do this. Sometimes, when that strikes out, it’s bad. You don’t want to be the victim.”

He took her set of keys and her driver’s license, along with jewelry and items of underwear. After wrapping the body in blankets from the bed, he got it into Hedge’s car. Rader was shocked at how difficult this process was. “It’s like a concrete box. [This was the] first time I had ever moved a body. I worried about my back as I lifted her out of the trunk.

“I took the car over to Christ Lutheran Church, where I had stashed some items.” In preparation, he had already purchased large sheets of black plastic. These he used to black out the windows so he could take photos of the body bound in ropes and handcuffs, without any passing drivers noticing lights on in the church.

“I tied her up in different positions and took pictures. I did not use the altar. I was bad and disturbed, but I still had respect for some items of God’s house.

“Finally, I had a real bondage picture with a victim, using a Polaroid that I had shoplifted. But daylight was coming fast. I knew of a spot on 53rd, between Greenwich and Webb, that people dumped trash at on the roadside, so I drove her car and body to it quickly. It was a muddy road. Then I had a key problem. I usually took the key ring apart to make it easier for me to find a single key in a hurry, and I dropped the key down the dash where I couldn’t reach it with gloves on. In a hurry, I broke the windshield to reach it. I knew the cops would wonder what *that* was about.

“I left the body in the ditch’s north side, covered it with brush and tree limbs, but forgot to remove the cord. I drove east to Greenwich, then north, throwing items away in the area of 69th. I wiped her car clean, parked it at Brittany Center, and placed the keys in a flower box as I walked east, then north, and then west, back to the bowling alley. I returned to the church to clean up, with very little time. As I drove back to the Scout camp, I threw some of her items away here and there. I had used this practice before, driving country roads and the like to get rid of things.”

The body went undiscovered, so Rader decided to collect the cord. “It could tie her killer to the Vian and Otero hits.” He changed his boots in order to prevent those he’d worn there from being traced to him. “On

Monday, I drove the company truck to the area. I thought I had better remove the cord. I had trouble finding her. I did at last and removed the cord. I used rubber boots to hide footprints.”

Although detectives later asked if he had killed the dog whose carcass they had found nearby, he said he had not noticed it.

“MH had an ankle bracelet. I took it and used it later in motel parties. I had to enlarge it to fit me. I had started using the church as a back-up Hidey Hole on certain items. The furnace room [was] a perfect place, next to the ceiling. Doing maintenance work at the church, I knew some good areas for Hidey Holes.

“The man who was with MH [that night] was the prime suspect. Paula was convinced he was guilty. He was the last one to see her alive. He also had been cutting evergreen trees, and evergreen needles were found in her car and truck, and she was covered in them. (They came from a tree at Christ Lutheran Church, as I moved her into and out of the church, and laid her on the ground.)”

Years later, Rader’s daughter Kerri would tell her story to the *Wichita Eagle*. She recalled that night, April 26, because the weather had disturbed her and her father had been away. When she learned about Marine Hedge’s murder so close by, she was terrified, but her father had reassured her that the Rader family was safe.

During his interrogation two decades later, Rader was uncomfortable admitting that he had taken the body to his church. It was bad enough that a good Christian man was killing people, but he had defiled the church as well. He originally lied to cover his embarrassment and said he had taken her to a barn. However, he knew that his posed photos would contradict this, so he admitted where he had been.

“[I felt] remorse and embarrassment as I spoke to the police. I tried to explain my feelings. I believe I used the ‘cube’ of White Hat, trying to paint a nice guy gone Black Hat. I was embarrassed to have used a church for foul deeds, and yet this was a perfect place to commit a crime [like this] or cover it up. The deed was done in a classroom, not in the main church area.”

As Rader had expected, the former BTK task force was uncertain whether this murder was related to the others. They waited for a letter, but none arrived. Rader knew that Hedge’s house was too close to his own to start a cat-and-mouse game. Still, he considered that this success had erased

his failure with Anna Williams. Rader was satisfied. But he also targeted a house on Cloverdale for another potential hit. Using a Boy Scouts 75th Anniversary meeting as a cover story, he went to the house and entered carefully, like a cat burglar. “The person or people had moved out. Did sexual fantasies at the house.”

In 1985, Rader became a maintenance officer for ADT. “I was the lead installer, but I also trained others to work on residence alarms.”

For Dennis Rader, life was good—both of them.

COLLECTORS

On June 2, 1985, in a San Francisco hardware store, an Asian man was caught shoplifting. He escaped before police arrived, but his partner, a bearded white man, did not. In his car, along with the stolen item, was an illegal .22-caliber revolver, so he was placed under arrest. He said his name was Robin Stapley and presented an ID that failed to match his appearance. The owner of the car he was driving had been missing for months.

In the police station, the bearded man requested a glass of water. He removed a pill from a secret pocket on his shirt and poisoned himself. The officers learned that the man’s real name was Leonard Lake. Robin Stapley, like the car’s owner, was missing.

Lake lived on a ranch in Wilseyville, where he had built a well-equipped cinderblock bunker. In detailed journals found there, Lake described his fear of a nuclear war and his determination to recreate the human race with female sex slaves. His inspiration was a novel by John Fowles: *The Collector*. It features Frederick, a lonely entomologist who abducts a woman named Miranda. He keeps her in a locked dungeon on his secluded property, where he can hold her indefinitely and do whatever he likes with her. She resists, but time is on his side. Although he expects that she will eventually come to love him, he treats her like a specimen in his butterfly collection. It’s just an experiment and she’s just a thing. He can manipulate the outcome to his satisfaction.

Because Miranda does grow submissive, the story delights predators like Lake: holding her captive worked! The message they see is that, with patience, captives can be made into willing, pliable sex slaves.

Lake and Charles Ng (the shoplifter, who partnered with Lake after answering a classified ad) had developed what they called the Miranda Project. Supposedly, they made and sold pornographic snuff films. Lake described the type of torture they had inflicted on a number of women, and a videotape showed Lake and Ng forcing women into submission. Those who resisted (pretty much all of them) were raped and killed. A dozen corpses were discovered in shallow graves on the grounds, including those of two children. Several of these were males who had been robbed and murdered, including Robin Stapley. There were also about 45 pounds of charred remains of human bones. In all, Lake and Ng were associated with two dozen deaths and disappearances.

Rader had several reasons for paying attention to this case and saw a lot of parallels with himself. “I had clippings about him [Lake] and his partner in my Hidey Hole folders, but killing babies was off my list. After the Oteros, and by random chance with Vian [who had three children], I decided that no young children would be involved by my hits. Although I did draw and fantasize about young girls at times, I doubt if I would have ever crossed that line—all talk, no walk! Many people think [the] Vian [murder] was planned, but actually [I had focused on] PJ Green that day. She was the target.

“Lake was diagnosed with schizoid personality disorder [characterized by a lack of interest in social relationships, a solitary lifestyle, secretiveness, emotional apathy, and a rich, exclusively internal fantasy world], which ties to me, but I was not bizarre to people, only odd at times. [Note: It’s likely that Rader is confusing schizoid with schizotypal; Lake could have been either.] Lake was fascinated by medieval legends and had a dungeon, like me with my castles, towers and barns. Lake liked paganism, and I had my monsters. Lake had issues of grandeur; same here. He thought of having female sex slaves, and I had visions of this as well, but was not obsessed with it. Lake used shackles, chains, and sexual devices. I did too. We both kept journals, both in the military.

“With the Oteros and Bright, all of the males were put down quickly (or I tried to) before I prepared the females. If during my crime run, a male happened to be there or to come in, he would be killed very quickly. Like Lake, I thought about using classified ads at one time—to get real girls to my motel parties, but having cover stories and spending the money was a problem. But I could imagine it as a fantasy theme.

“I took pictures, so did Lake. I was fascinated with ‘snuff films’ and he made them. He dismembered people and buried them. Once or twice, I had buried myself in sort of ‘self-killed’ bondage fantasies and took pictures. I kept them in my Hidey Hole. Lake had slow torture devices for his victims and he used sadomasochistic devices, like me. I had many thoughts along those lines. Lake had some obsessive-compulsive personality features. I had some but not obsessed. I like routines and have the same habits, but not OCD. Lake [committed] suicide, and I had thought about doing this in the early years. Like me, he did not stand out in crowd. We were wolves in sheep’s clothing.”

Rader also read a true crime article about serial killer Randy Kraft, and found even greater affinity, despite Kraft’s preference for adult male victims. Kraft had been picked up during a traffic violation in 1983; the body of his latest victim was in the passenger seat.

Kraft seems to have been one of the most prolific serial killers in the country, although evidence could be found for just sixteen of his suspected sixty-plus murders. He would pick up young hitchhikers, but he also liked Marines. Kraft would present himself as friendly and helpful, then provide his victims with drug-laced drinks. As they became immobilized, he would sadistically torture them with knives and other implements, generally aimed at their genitals. When finished, he often pushed the body out of his car along a lonely freeway.

When caught, Kraft had a “scorecard” in his possession with code names for what police believed were his victims. He also had a number of items, such as shirts and ID cards, from victims. Investigators matched over forty of his code names with dead bodies in several states, but nearly twenty went unmatched. Kraft claimed to be innocent of all these crimes, including the death of the man who was in the passenger’s seat when he was stopped for suspected drunk driving. His excuse was lame. After a long trial, Kraft was convicted and sent to death row.

Like Rader, Kraft had been born in March 1945, and Rader noticed many other similarities between them. Kraft had been popular, successful at his computer-programming job, in a relationship, and attentive to his parents and siblings. Yet he had led a secret double life.

Kraft had a large group of advocates who believed that the police had made a serious mistake. He was such a stand-up guy, so helpful and nice,

with such a “can-do” attitude and such good manners that he could not possibly be a vicious killer. Or so they believed.

A psychiatrist evaluated Kraft with positron emission tomography (a PET scan), suggesting that a head injury when he was young had damaged his frontal lobes, making it difficult for him to inhibit his violent tendencies. This would explain his obsessive-compulsive behavior as well. His peers would view him as normal, if a bit eccentric, in his need to keep things under control. He would develop rituals.

Other mental health experts suggested that one of Kraft’s driving forces was to take on and beat challenges. Killing was the ultimate challenge, becoming an addiction. He was good at it and he got away with it for years. It gave him the sense of control over his life that he craved. Highly sensitive to criticism, he strove for a sense of perfection.

Adrian Raine discusses Kraft, the “Scorecard Killer,” in *The Anatomy of Violence*. He describes Kraft’s ordinary childhood in a loving home with hardworking, middle-class parents. Kraft achieved a college degree and maintained steady employment. Yet he had “a mind to crime.” Raine had worked with the psychiatrist, Monte Buchsbaum, who did Kraft’s PET scan. A PET scan can measure metabolic activity in various regions of the brain. During the early 1990s, neuropsychologists had scanned the brains of murderers to see if something set them apart from ordinary people. Prior to the scans, they gave the killers cognitive tasks. Compared to a matched normal group, the murderers showed little activity in the prefrontal cortex, suggesting that they could barely control their primitive drives. Given this trait, they would also be more likely to engage in risky behavior and to experience an inability to modify behavior appropriately in response to known consequences.

Kraft, however, did *not* have reduced functioning in his prefrontal cortex. He was able to plan and he successfully fooled everyone (including a longtime lover who shared his home). He figured out quickly that molesting young men risked an investigation, but not if they were killed before they could tell anyone.

Raine used Kraft’s PET scan results to distinguish between proactive and reactive violence, with Kraft showing the proactive side: methodical, calculating, rational, adaptive, and aware of how to troubleshoot. Such killers are coldly reward-driven. They have as much prefrontal function as normal people. However, they also share something in common with the

reactive killers: both groups show elevation in activity in the brain's limbic system, especially in areas that regulate emotion. Both groups will act out, but the proactive group can funnel their urges through a controlled plan. Aware of consequences, they want to "get mad" but not get caught, so they find ways to channel their needs that will keep their dark sides effectively hidden. Once they arrive at the point of violence, they feel safe enough—thanks to their plans and rituals—to fully unleash their lust, or rage, or both. They have no compunction about fully indulging.

Rader has wondered what his own brain would show on a PET scan. Given his similarities to Kraft, and the fact that both sustained head injuries as children, Rader could fall into Raine's proactive group.

CASE NO. 05CR498

At 11:54 a.m. on September 16, 1986, Gordon Wegerle called 911 to report that someone had murdered his wife, Vicki, inside their home. He had come home for lunch and found his wife tied up on the bedroom floor. His two-year-old son was seemingly unharmed. Wegerle said that he had seen someone driving what looked like his own gold 1978 Monte Carlo, going in the opposite direction. Upon arriving home, he had discovered that the car was missing.

First responders went to 2404 West 13th Street. Vicki Wegerle's hands were tied behind her and her feet were bound with a leather lace. She lay between the bed and the wall, her jeans unzipped and breasts exposed. A small pocket knife lay near her head. Gordon said he'd used the knife to cut a knotted nylon stocking and knotted leather shoelace from around her neck. These items were on the floor. No police photos were taken, and attempts to revive Vicki failed. The abandoned Monte Carlo was found in a store parking lot at 13th and Edwards, a couple of blocks from the Wegerle home.

BACK ON THE PROWL

Due to his “social obligations,” Rader now had a limited time frame in which to complete a project. The security job allowed him to drive around, but this sort of prowling failed to fully satisfy. He decided to kill someone during his lunch hour. He had spotted Vicki, a twenty-eight-year-old mother of a young boy, while he was driving around. She was at her home, getting out of her car. He began to stalk her, spending about three weeks in the process.

“In the stalking time frame, I parked at Indian Hills South parking lot, hidden in direct view. Thus, I could observe her coming and going at lunch. This depended on me working in that area close enough to swing by. The local branch main supervisor had left the company, as a corporate raider took over. He took a lot of material, namely accounts and photocopies with him. Me, like a lot of employees, [were] hurt and confused. In the transition, I had free time. I used that time for the hit. What’s the theory? When the cat’s away, the mice will play.

“I decided on a ruse as a telephone repairman. I already wore technician-type clothes. I used a Southwestern Bell Telephone logo that I had cut from a phone book and taped to a hard hat, and an ID that I had made. I drove my personal car there, not the company truck, parked, and walked across the street in broad daylight, never looking directly at anyone. I wore sunglasses, carried a briefcase, and kept the hat down close to my eyes.

“First, I went next door. I spoke to the couple there, keeping the sunglasses on, and asked some tech type questions. This way, it would look like I was going through the neighborhood. (I’m surprised that nothing [was] ever said about them. Perhaps the police didn’t want to report any findings to protect them.)

“If there had been younger people in that house, or a curious type of person, I may have decided against the hit that day, or just used it as a practice or to get more information. On the other hand, if a lone female had answered the door instead of a couple, she might have become BH#9 instead of Mrs. Wegerle.

“One reason I picked Wegerles’ was the covered porch. The door was less visible to drive-bys. As I approached it I could hear a piano sound. So, she became PJ Piano. Organ music would have been better. I also think that when I had walked by during prowl and troll days, I had heard her play.

“(I always liked the piano. I had hope to learn to play it, yet it has a mystical power on me. My grandparents Rader had one. As a child I would play on it. Organ and piano [music] in Minotaur movies held an appeal. The music from *Phantom of the Opera* very sexually exciting to me. At church, while I was doing maintenance, the organist would play organ and piano. She never knew how close she came to becoming a victim so many times. I worked my brain over trying to figure out a way to get her, and yet still have a good cover story. She became PJ Organ or PJ Church in the prowl and troll period, and even closer as I worked out details on the hit.)

“I went to Wegerle’s door, knocked, and asked her if I could come check her telephone lines inside. She let me in. Upon entering the Wegerle residence, I saw a baby in the playpen in the living room and I could hear dogs barking. There were at least two large dogs outside in Wegerle’s backyard. They were really loud and scratching at the back door. If they had got in, what a mess.

“She showed me where the telephone was. I had a fake instrument and pretended to fiddle with it as a phone tester. When she looked away, I drew my .25-caliber auto. She was scared. She started to cry. She said her husband was coming home for lunch, and he would be there soon. She asked about the baby.

“I ordered her to go back to the bedroom with me. I said I was going to have to tie her up. She was very upset. I first used a stocking from her dresser, but after I tied her hands she broke that, and we started fighting. She fought hard. She fought like a hellcat. She scratched my nose and face. There I left DNA (unknown), but later I worry about it. Also, had to cosmetically cover the wound at home. Much like BH#5 [Kathryn Bright], women can fight hard, but no way was I going to knife or shoot her.

“I finally gained on her and put her down. I strangled her with a nylon stocking. I thought she was dead, but apparently she wasn’t. She wasn’t moving. I opened her clothes a little bit and took some quick photos, three of them. I did not have handcuffs, as I had thrown them away after MH and had not purchased another pair. I took some trophies to use later for bondage.

“Mrs. Wegerle laid east of the bed, her head to south, as I left her. The bedroom windows were east of her. I was afraid the east neighbor may have heard the noise or seen some activity in her bedroom, a reason to rush and get out of there. The dogs in the back were raising a lot of Cain, and the

windows were all open in the house. She had mentioned something about her husband coming home, so I got out of there pretty quick.

“Not to complain, but the law of averages didn’t play well for me in the day hits. I guess there are too many unaccountable things in the victim’s life. Only [with] the Oteros did I have time. Even on the PJ Mustang [after Wegerle], which was almost identical to Wegerle, when I acted like a phone man, she seem to get nervous and speak about boarding people who live there coming home soon. After the mess at Wegerle’s, Bright’s, and Vian’s, I took no chances [with that project] and left quickly.

“I left the baby alone. I didn’t touch him. He didn’t see anything. I put everything in my briefcase. I had already gone through her purse, got the keys to the car and used her car for my getaway.

“I recall driving away from the area, [hearing] police and ambulance vehicles heading northbound as I headed south near Riverside Hospital. I had been to the hospital before, visiting relatives, patients, Christmas caroling, or ADT services, fire alarm.

“It was a feeling of power and control to take [a car]. It was also a way to move out of there quickly, and less chance of someone remembering a male walking away, carrying a black brief case. It was a busy street. Many would remember that male after hearing about the crime.

“Could it be that in the ‘troll and prowler’ days, my brain automatically remembered the Monte Carlo from MH’s house? Was that what caught my attention to Mrs. Wegerle in the first place? The references of life seem to play out in my life of correspondences. I call it the ‘Black Hole Theory of D.L.R.’ If you cross path with me, there could be future dark things or events to come.

“I took Wegerle’s purse, the one that held her keys and driver’s license, or it could be that I dumped it all into my briefcase. Before leaving the car parked on Edwards, I removed the driver’s license, etc, and stuffed the rest under the car seat.

“I drove west on 13th Street. Probably Mr. Wegerle passed me at that point. Then I went north to 21st, and east to Braun’s Ice Cream Store to put the briefcase in a dumpster. Then I went to a strip mall area at the northeast corner of 21st and Meridian. I left the hard hat in a trashcan near a muffler shop. I cleaned out the car before leaving the area. This is the same area of PJ Twin Lakes, the bank teller of late 1973 or early 1974.

“I drove west out of Wichita, then along country roads, I threw items away from the crime scene, or things I had used. I stopped somewhere and got rid of my clothes. Then I redressed in ADT clothes, walked to my car at Indian Hills, and returned to work in the early afternoon. Long lunch hour!”

Rader kept the telephone company emblem as a reminder of his successful ruse. It seemed innocuous enough and might work again. He heard the emergency vehicles rushing to the Wegerle house and realized he’d had a close call. Had any of the officers swarming the scene stopped him, he was ready to use his gun.

He hid Wegerle’s driver’s license and the three Polaroid photos he took of her in one of his special places.

Rader sent no communications about this murder. BTK was not publicly linked to the crime, and Wegerle’s husband became the chief suspect. He was never charged, but many officers continued to believe he was a wife-killer. Officially, Vicki Wegerle’s murder went unsolved.

“I feel great remorse and sadness today on the death of Mrs. Wegerle. My heart goes out to Mr. Wegerle and his family. I would have reacted the same if I came home and found my wife killed. Why is it now, and even back in 1986 and 1989, I felt remorse, yet started back up again?”

10 I HAVE A PROBLEM

I'm a good person who did some bad things.

Dennis Rader

Rader's jobs provided more opportunities to prowl, both around town and out of town. He estimates that more than thirty of his "projects"—and nearly as many home entries—could have resulted in murder victims. He provided a list: PJ Sweet Roll, PJ Cap, PJ White, and PJ Woof, among others. With PJ Salt, he was working on getting in the back door when the couple came home. "I left in a hurry, but if inside, I would have confronted them. In PJ MTV, I watched two females trying to start a car. A police officer came and wondered why I hadn't helped them. I gave a good ruse.

"One I recall, PJ Mother, was in South Wichita. She was shopping. I followed her home, and later I drove by her house many times, thinking about her. I ate at nearby places and watched the house; I followed her husband one day, learning his everyday habits. In my fantasy world, I rigged a bug in the house and on the phone lines to learn many more habits and routines. The house was the center theme of PJs, and how to get inside successfully.

"PJ Mother didn't work out. It was a very complex day of cover stories and transportation, as I was working that day. She either wasn't home or didn't answer the front door [when I knocked]. I was sure she was there alone. The car she drove was there, her kids were at school, and her husband was at work. I was watching. I failed to connect.

"I switched gears, and worked on PJ Bell in Belleville, KS, while working from Mankota at an old meat packing plant. It was closed and they wanted an alarm system for insurance purposes. It was probably in the winter of 1987. We were very busy, and actually my job title as Service Supervisor did not make rules for me. I restocked my truck, laid out my installation tool equipment, and headed north. Prior to this trip, I tried a complicated hit on PJ Pawnee [which failed].

"After work, I would find a place to eat or go to a store and buy some food to eat at the motel. As I drove around, I looked the town over, scoping

it out and did mental imagining for possible later use. Occasionally, I would drive to another town and do the same. This is what happened at Belleville.

“I drove over one day and started the trolling process. I never drove by a place too often, and I tried to blend in as much as possible. I parked downtown and walked into a shopping center with a bowling alley, by a movie house or bar. My fantasy dream was to get a victim away from their place, with time to bind and gag them better and take pictures in *my* element, not theirs. Also, you never knew what schedule they may have, or if someone would come to visit or call. I’ve had that happen a lot. A barn or shed, or old house would have been perfect, but in that town all I could find was a wooded area south of town, where I could park their vehicle, move them into the woods, do the BTK thing, hide them, and drive back to their place or close by to walk to my truck.

“So it was this day in the winter of 1987. I spotted a female parking her car in a garage and entering the house. She was somewhere in her late 30s. The house was by itself and had access to the back from a neighborhood street. A bowling alley was close by, and [there were] trees and shrubs to hide by. The trolling had moved to the stalking phase that quickly. I drove through town, looking for a spot to take her. I decided on the area south of town and came back. I had supper and parked at the bowling alley. Casing and peeking, I found out she had kids but [saw] no presence of a male. I moved about outside, window to window, in the dark, peeking inside as well as [looking for a] possible stalking layout, a phone line and a possible way to get in. That night, that’s all I did.

“I drove back late to the motel and [the] next day I went over the sexually victim fantasy—details to work out and plan while I worked at the meat packing place. I got excited.

“Either on the second or third night, I dressed in dark clothes—my so-called ‘hit’ clothes—took my hit kit, a gun, tape, handcuffs, a plastic bag, cord, rope, a scarf, a knife, a crowbar, pliers, tools to break in, a glasscutter, a mask, and gloves—cotton and plastic. I placed the items, like the gun, handcuffs or tie-wrap, and scarf in my pocket for easy access. I carried the rest in a bag. I always carried two guns, my magnum and .22 or .25 auto for a back-up weapon. I used either a shoulder holster or a belt one.

“To a person who might see me on the street, I was out for a walk or a jog. The bag I carried I could easily hide in the coat or sweater. I never tried

to get myself in a position where police would stop me or question me. My sixth sense [was] always alert.

“That night, the truck was parked at the bowling alley. I walked to the house. It was dark, no lights were on. The woman had retired early or she was gone. I checked the garage. No car. I knocked on the door. No one answered. I had a dilemma and a decision to make: proceed or quit? It was cold. This was like the Otero event. Do I wait until I can confront them outside? Inside, or in garage? I felt like the best control was inside the home. People feel safer in there, even in bad situations.

“First, I cut [the] phone line on the north side of house. Then, using glasscutters and tape, I broke out the basement window, being careful not to cut myself. I entered and used a flashlight covered with tape, except for a pinhole of light that I could cover with my finger to control the light beam. I also had a larger flashlight.

“I checked the house and decided where to confront them [when they returned]. Once tied up and gagged, I would move them to their vehicle and drive out to the woods. The idea [was that] no bodies [would be] found for a few days. Just missing people. Then the police would centralize their search in Belleville. Yes, there was a broken window and cut line, so they were kidnapped, but where? Would someone step forward and say, we spotted a white van at bowling alley? That was a gamble I took many times. I looked for houses near commercial areas where I could park and not be noticed.

“In the house, I waited and waited. Did I really want to do this, or was the excitement, the trolling and stalking and breaking in enough to fulfill the desire? If they came home, it was too late to back out. I stole some lingerie, a red bra and panties, and some jewelry. It got later and later, and no one came. I knew this would put my truck in plain sight, as others left, with no one around.

“The decision to leave was made. I placed the items I took in a pillowcase and a black plastic bag, dumped them outside in shrubs and walked to my truck. I drove back, picked up the sack, and went back to the motel. I took the items and hid them in a culvert until I left later that week.”

STIR UP THE POT

With the development of DNA analysis for crime investigation, Wichita police now had a viable way to match biological samples from crime scenes with a suspect. First used in the United States in 1987, DNA analysis was much more precise than blood tests. It was expensive, however, and few jurisdictions could afford it. The Wichita PD had collected biological samples at some of the BTK crime scenes, but task force leaders believed they should wait before submitting samples for testing. They did not want to destroy what they had. Should they ever identify a suspect, they would have a powerful resource.

On December 31, 1987, Mary Fager returned from an out-of-town visit. The car was gone from her home on East 14th Street, so she thought her daughters might be out. To her shock, she discovered her husband, Phillip, on the living room floor, dead. He had been shot. She called 911. The arriving officers discovered a more gruesome scene in the basement. Fager's two daughters had been concealed under the cloth cover of the bubbling hot tub. Nine-year-old Sherri, nude, had been strangled. Kelli Jo, sixteen, had been bound and dumped in the tub to drown.

Autopsies determined that the triple homicide had occurred the day before, that the girls had boiled in the tub for hours, and that Sherri had died hours before Kelli Jo. An early suspect was Bill Butterworth, a contractor who had recently built the Fager's sunroom. Inexplicably, he had emptied his bank account, purchased new clothes, and stolen the Fagers' car. The police located him in Florida and brought him back for trial. Butterworth claimed that he had entered the home, seen the bodies, and become so traumatized that he fled. He could hardly recall what he had done that day, although he admitted to entering the house several times.

A few days later, on January 5, the post office delivered an envelope to the Fagers' house. In it was a drawing of a young girl, bound and lying next to a tub. It also contained a poem entitled, "Oh God He Put Kelli Sherri in the Tub." The author seemed pleased by the murders but did not claim credit. "Another one prowls the deep abyss of lewd thoughts and deeds," he wrote. The message seemed to be from BTK. Investigators guessed that he had read about the crime in the newspaper and decided to add his own sadistic flourish. The symbol-type signature was similar to those he had placed on other missives, but the drawing was not an accurate rendition of the crime. This time he seemed to be merely a voyeuristic participant. If the

note was from BTK, however, it would confirm that the killer was local, and that he was still around.

Years later, Rader admitted to police that he had sent Mrs. Fager the letter and drawing. "I was just trying to stir up the pot," he said. Here are his thoughts on why he did it.

"Let's put the BTK life line into a nutshell. Compare it to a volcano. Early into its formation, a crack in the main structure occurs. Over the years, that crack produces more cracks and bad rock formations. All the time, pressure builds up in the main chamber, although there are no major eruptions. Some cracks let lava out to the surface and each time there is a cooling effect. Then in the fall of 1973, a major fault occurs, which led to the major eruption on January 15, 1974. A cooling time [followed], and then another eruption in April, only a few months apart. Then a cooling until 1977, yet to the eye nothing. But underneath pressure [is] building again. What nature needs most: time, the time to build and follow through. The key element may be there, the 'witch's brew,' but if you don't have the time to mix it properly, it won't erupt. That element came to play between 9/1986 to 01/1991. The molten lava couldn't find the time. The hidden hours and time away from home was just simply not there, so it had to find a different way to erupt, and closer to [the] home rock base.

"At home in my paperwork area, I kept clean envelopes and paper. Most often in the early cat-and-mouse game, the original drafts were photocopied. The copies were copied several times, on different machines. For the person receiving the notes, they had been copied at least three times. I used [copy machines at] Dillons, Leeker's, Quick-Trip, Food Mart and others. I kept my clean paper in plastic sheets and used gloves or trimmed the edges. Working in my bedroom, I made up the poem [for Mary Fager] and drew the picture of what my fantasy world pictured in my mind.

"I had done this before after reading *True Detectives* and similar books on crime, or seen a newspaper article. Key elements were binding, drowning and strangling. Yes, it happened to a young person, but [in my mind] it could have been Mrs. Fager. The victim was not important. The message of bound, drowned, and nude were my overall themes—the '3.' I don't recall if the girls were sexually molested. The closest I came [to doing this] was #4 [Josephine]. I touched her breast after she died. For some reason, I felt rape and other types of sexual abuse were beyond me, even if I killed them. There would be no sexual molestation. That is important, the

binding them, tie them up, strangling, was all I needed to develop a fantasy world for self gratification.

“Kelli’s age was 16, so 6 refers to 3s. Sherri was 9. I had at times gotten sexually excited with swimming pools, horse tanks, the tub at home, of [being] bound in the water, [the image of] downing. Thus, it was another reason for the cat-and-mouse. At the Fager house, the predator spent time with Kelli. If that had been BTK, [it] probably would have been the same. In the real world, 8 hours would have been impossible. In the fantasy world, both girls, ideally, would have been taken to BTK’s den, the barn, the Death To Pretty Girls place. I didn’t mean to add misery for Mrs. Fager, only to play out cat-and-mouse for the police and media.”

Rader found places to secretly bind himself. He even dug holes and placed himself into these “graves,” wrapped like a mummy in plastic. He rigged up his camera to take photos of himself remotely. He started writing journals to list the steps of his hits, and this is where he best expressed his sexual desires. He sometimes looked for vulnerable women, but he was busy with a “normal” life.

In the summer of 1988, Rader lost his job with ADT, as he had feared. Now forty-three, he thought it would be difficult to find another job. Paula became the primary breadwinner again, which was a blow to his ego. His fantasy life returned full-force. Women in charge made him feel off-balance. In his imagination, they often ended up bound and helpless.

“I replayed fantasy PJs with myself with bondage and finally self-gratification. I reviewed victim’s souvenirs and added items to folders for the Hidey Holes. I cut out bondage and *True Detective* articles and made Slick Ad Girls. As the year grew, the motel parties became more complicated. I added pictures of myself in bondage, videos, more PJ clothing. I used dolls as fantasy victims in bondage.

“I used to hunt and fish in an area where a highway runs across the Big Arkansas River. I was gathering poles for a teepee for the Scouts. Many times I would gather the material by myself. I would hoist myself on a tree upside down for self-gratification. With no job, I had a lot of time on my hands and I was feeling low and disturbed.

“I tried to obtain work as a police officer. I applied to the Wichita PD, the Sheriff’s department and the Highway Patrol. All three turned me down. They didn’t give a reason, but it was probably my age. That might have

triggered my next victim. Over the next few years, I really started going wild, with more stalking, BES, and PJS, perhaps to let off steam.

“From 1988 through May 1991 were some rough times for us. Even when I found work with the Census, I knew it was temporary. Then one time, Paula got very sick and needed a hospital stay. I had to become ‘Mr. Mom’ and take care of the kids.”

SERIAL KILLERS GAIN FAME

During the 1980s, coverage of serial killers became its own industry, inspiring groupies, serial killer wannabes, and entrepreneurs who created trading cards and sold memorabilia. Some people wrote books or participated in documentaries denouncing their relatives as serial killers, often without evidence. People freely displayed their childhood damage, real or imagined, on daytime talk shows. In such a culture, some serial killers became celebrities, as both perpetrators and abuse sufferers.

Among the most famous was Henry Lee Lucas, who admitted to more than 350 murders. Lucas was jailed in Texas in 1983, for illegal possession of a weapon. He told a jailer that he’d done some “bad things,” and began to confess . . . and confess. Late in 1983, the Texas Rangers spearheaded the Henry Lee Lucas Task Force. By that time, Lucas had taken credit for around 125 murders. Reporters flocked to Texas. The killer’s notoriety blossomed.

For three days in January 1984, 107 officers from eighteen states and the District of Columbia filled the Holidome in Louisiana, questioning Lucas on their open homicide cases. Lucas was having a fine time, until a reporter began to find contradictions in his responses. Then Lucas recanted. Eventually, he took back the recantation, and then recanted again. Most of the cases against him collapsed.

During this era, those who solved the crimes, covered them, wrote about them, survived them, or fictionalized them became celebrities-by-proxy. Audience fascination increased with each gory detail. Serial killers crept into television series and novels, and reporters prepared for the next grisly offender.

None of this was lost on Rader. He watched a movie about Ed Gein, a demented killer from Wisconsin, who kidnapped and strung up women in

his shed like deer. His weird tale had inspired the novel and film *Psycho*. “I studied a book on him and watched a theater movie about him in the late 80s. So sexually excited, I went into the bathroom, cut a hole in my pocket, and then returned to watch the movie again for self-gratification, as he had one of his victims in a barn. I found and kept clippings on him.”

Rader wondered why so many other serial killers were getting famous while the BTK Killer was not. Hardly anyone outside Wichita knew about him; even in Wichita, the media seemed to have moved on. No one was writing about this series of unsolved crimes. But the Green River Killer in the Seattle area got press, especially when Ted Bundy got involved. As a task force investigated the forty-plus murders, Bundy said he could help them “understand” the “Riverman’s” mind.

In 1980, Ann Rule had published *The Stranger Beside Me*, about her friendship with Bundy at a Seattle crisis clinic. He had been a compassionate hotline counselor, she said, and had fooled her for years. Rader had read this book with great interest, as Rule provided a solid outline of Bundy’s MO from state to state.

Rader also was interested in Bundy’s self-analysis, published in a book that featured lengthy discussions between Bundy and author Steven Michaud. Bundy stated that serial murderers go through a developmental process. The early days are experimental, with errors, but as the killer perfects his technique, he gets smoother. The predatory urge is like the addiction of an alcoholic, Bundy explained. It can be demanding. As Bundy himself got better at it, he looked for greater challenges. During these encounters, Bundy believed that some malignant part of his personality took over—he called it “the entity”—looking for satisfaction.

Two Florida juries had convicted Bundy of three murders and sentenced him to death. In January 1989, when it became clear that there would be no more delays for Bundy’s execution, he tried to make himself valuable. He agreed to tell detectives about more victims and, in an attempt to persuade scientists that he should be kept alive and studied, he said that he had never been physically or emotionally abused, insisting that he was from a loving Christian family (like Rader). Bundy argued that he had gotten addicted to violent pornography through true detective magazines. He thought society should wake up to the harm that free access to this material could cause.

Ted Bundy was executed on January 24, 1989, with the international media there to capture the event. Rader read the news reports with a level of envy.

Then his life changed again. He got a job with the U.S. Census. “I was the Field Operation Supervisor for Wichita. I would go help find district offices. I was what I call a ‘white rat.’ I reported to the Head Cheese. I was sort of a spy for the various people I supervised. I drifted to three district offices to check operations and report back on their work. I also worked as a technical advisor. I was an expert on all operations for the Census. I helped hire staff, and helped set up and close down. I was the last person to lock the doors.” The position was temporary, but it paid the bills. He picked up some part-time jobs to fill in the gaps. Meanwhile, the out-of-town trips gave him a good cover story for juicing up his fantasy life.

“My first *major* motel party was in Elk City, Oklahoma. I worked there on off days, in between trainings. Before I was able to travel, I was limited on extravagance. Usually it was in barns or such places and I had little time. As the trips increased and became more lavish, the motel parties became a sex drug. I looked forward to them, a reward after a long day—a hot date with a sex fantasy victim.

“I had favorite motels, where I felt safe from prying eyes. I liked Best Westerns, Regals, Hampton Inns, motels like these. I could carry everything in without passing through a lobby. Parking on front of the room was best of all. I had stored things at home in a suitcase, which I locked if I had to leave it in the room. Or I might find a local bus depot with lockers, or hide things under the box spring. That was a good place, if the hotel had it. If there were no lockers, I had pre-selected hiding places. I was careful with BH-type items. Only rarely did I take them with me. If I used victims’ clothing in my motel parties, I would bring the items home, wash them, dry them and store them for a later party. Occasionally, I placed a women’s perfume pack inside the bag to enhance the fantasy.

“I became a regular at these motels, so I didn’t raise suspicion.

“They usually started the same way: buy groceries and odds and ends. I might sleep for an hour or two first—a power nap. Along the evening, either I’m a fantasy victim or would become involved in S/M bondage ritual. Precursors would be the latest slick ad review or a new addition to the 3x5 pile. I might watch TV, hoping for a sexually show. Closer to

midnight, R-rated shows would come on, but I stayed away from paying for X-rated. Sometimes I rented a DVD recorder and brought a DVD with me.

“For bondage, I used all kinds of gadgets on me. I had my favorite feminine clothes, the red bra from PJ Bell, the chemise from PJ Foxtail, jewelry from De-Flower, satin houserobe from PJ Prairie, colored pantyhose from so many, slips, panties, wigs, masks of different types, much like ‘Buffalo Bill’ from *The Silence of the Lambs*, a good book and movie for a motel party.

“I believe my ‘Buffalo Bill’ theme came from me as a role-playing sadist, as a Minotaur. The female part came from all the slick ads, the female from *Dudley Do-right*, and the sex drive by me for females. I would dress or role-play as a female, the Minotaur closing in on me, bound, some light or mental torture, death coming. I would explode into self-gratification. Like every good monster movie, the Minotaur always has a pretty female victim or would-be victim. To me, the play-acting part could be any female, the age didn’t matter. It was the S/M theme. Part of my S/M bondage theme was to have a picture, if not live, then dead. The key elements were bondage. Much like Glatman, [the picture would show] their final minutes before death.

“I put the TV on in the background to deaden the noise as I laid the bondage theme upon myself or a fantasy victim. I had an endless array of ideas. At times, I tied my legs to the corner of the bed, and loose bonds with the hands in the corner, tying a rope to [my] groin area, a plastic bag over my head. As air ran out, the feeling of helplessness and that death may come, with tight rope in the groin, then Big G happened. I used a U-bolt for ankle bondage. I used dowel wooden rods a lot in a device I made (hidden under the bed during the day). It was fun to shop for bondage devices, like the Clutter killers.

“Once when I was at a Regal 8 in Topeka, I created a device to cause auto-asphyxiation. Bound to a chair, I rigged a rope and pulley system to the bathtub. As the water dripped into a bucket, by means of a rope, it tightened a noose around a plastic bag over my head. It made me feel like ‘The Pit and the Pendulum.’ Release came as the bag tightened. The key was to be tightly tied, but always leave one hand free to undo the bag. I was aroused by the tightness and helplessness, and death coming closer and closer.

“I did the mummy with rope or tape, and added a plastic bag. My first mask was like the mummy. I used bandages like the kind used to wrap an ankle. Using plaster of Paris and water, I wrapped the material around my face. I used Vaseline on my face to keep it from sticking and cutting a hole for air. I designed it and let it set. It’s in some of the motel party pictures I took. My sexual excitement came more from this kind of activity than going after a person. The thrill and feeling of all the stuff laid out. I was addicted to the ritual of S/M bondage. Going through it was all I needed.

“I used handcuffs but was very careful with them. I usually fixed the key on a string or taped it in place so I wouldn’t lose it. One time in Pittsburg, I accidentally dropped the key or broke it off. I couldn’t get out of the cuffs. I had to dress and cover my arms with a jacket, sneak to my truck to find something to pry the cuff apart. Never again, I said!

“Once or twice I almost didn’t get untied as air ran out, or I was in a choking position, so after that, I always made sure I could get a hand free. I had read about people who died this way and it looked like suicide. It’s a dangerous game! Sometimes I practiced hit techniques on me.

“I once videotaped myself and used it at motel parties again and again.

“There were lots of motel parties during this time. I made a Jason hockey mask. I tried to break in and get a female mannequin in Topeka, but failed. In Wichita, when the Census job ended after a year, I had an ‘office party’ by myself on closing day. I wrapped myself in a large plastic sheet to simulate asphyxiation and took self pictures. I used packing tape for bonds. I had hidden my hit items in the false ceiling. I was going to wait for a coworker, but it never happened.

“I read somewhere that people who do S/M use plastic bags over their heads to achieve gratification together. I believe that the loss of control, the feeling of no air and [being] helpless is the reason they’re used. I blended S/M together. The letter ‘S’ related to Sparky, and suffocation. I had read a paperback book where the Minotaur used large plastic garment bags for hits. He tied up victims to suffocate them. He also enjoyed being in there with them, or he used the plastic bags to climax with the victim, breathing their air, their fear smell. Naturally, he could escape but they could not.

“I believe I photocopied the front cover of this book and reduced it to 3x5 size. It showed a woman in distress behind a plastic veil. There was texture or raised letters! I probably destroyed the book upon my cleanup,

but kept the 3x5 card in a Hidey Hole. I would eventually copy it [the cover] onto a CD. I don't recall the title.

"Once I bought a garment bag big enough for me and did bondage and pretended to suffocate in it. Or I would simulate a figure inside it, with me on top, poking my head inside, with the zipper tight. I kept this bag folded up in my home closet in my locked big travel suitcase. I used it for motel parties only.

"I did this to dolls in motel parties. I [was] usually in some kind of semi-bondage to achieve gratification, with the large plastic bag over me and the doll-like figure. My sweat smell, added perfume, figure in bondage, the 'G' [gratification] came quickly.

"I often traveled between Wichita, Topeka, and Hays. There were PJs in all of those cities. With PJ Cap in Topeka, I broke in and waited, but it was a no go. That was a couple in a gift shop. I took items from the house. In Hays in 1989, from PJ Prairie, I broke into the house and waited. For this PJ, I had dug a grave site in a clump of evergreens north of Hays, near a river. The act of digging was sexually exciting. I had cased the house and knew the woman's schedule. My only time issue was that I told Paula I would call. I dressed in my hit clothes and left at the motel's back entrance. I parked at a bowling alley and walked over. She was not home, so I cut the phone line and broke in. I waited a long time until I felt the pressure to call my wife. I took some lingerie, jewelry, and ID. I took a box of important papers and dumped them on a construction property. I didn't want to destroy them, as I felt I had caused her enough problems. I knew someone would find them. Is this remorse? When I called Paula, I told her I had been to the movies. I even had a ticket stub, just in case.

"In either 1989 or 1990, I had PJ Mustang. I was installing home security alarms [freelance] to make money. I was inside, like with #9 [Wegerle] action, but PJ Mustang got suspicious of me. [I called her this because] she had a Mustang and I wanted to drive it as the getaway car.

"On one Census trip to Elk City, I came across a young woman in a stalled vehicle. I used the ruse that I wanted to help. I looked at the engine, but then two males stopped to help. I let them take over and they all thanked me.

"That summer, the Census job ended. No more road trips. Now I was older and it was even harder to find a job. I had time on my hands, not a good thing."

11 STIR UP THE POT

I move about outside, window to window, in the dark, peeking inside . . .
Dennis Rader

CASE NO. 05CR498

On January 19, 1991, a sheriff's deputy was sent to a home on North Hillside to check a possible robbery. The sixty-two-year-old homeowner, Dolores Davis, was missing. A friend of hers, who had stopped by to work on her car, reported what he had found. The curtains were drawn and an outside light was on, although it was 12:30 p.m. Her car was in the drive rather than the garage, where she always put it. The door between the garage and residence was standing open and the phone cord in the kitchen had been pulled from its jack. A cinder block sat on the living room floor, amid broken glass from a window. In the bedroom, the linens had been stripped from the bed. Dolores was nowhere to be found.

Detectives found a purple hairnet in the hedgerow outside, and a neighbor pointed out a set of car keys on the garage roof. A rug was found in the car's trunk. A quarter mile north, a deputy found sheets and a mattress pad stuffed into a culvert. (Although police didn't realize it, a piece of plastic from Rader's .22 was among the glass from the broken window.)

Davis' son tried to contact her, without success. He mentioned that she had heard something outside a few nights earlier and had been concerned.

On February 1, a boy walking his dog at 117th Street, west of Meridian, found something shocking under a bridge. The frozen body lay face-up, partially exposed. A pair of pantyhose was wrapped tightly around the neck and the legs were tied with pantyhose at the knees. A hand-painted porcelain mask lay nearby. The remains were

identified as those of Dolores Davis. Animals had eaten parts of her face, hands, and feet.

FINAL FANTASY, FOILED

“The sexual predator instinct kicks in,” Rader wrote in his journal. He had been to the Davis house several times, scoping it out. “She lived on Hillside and there were dog kennels near her home, so she was Project Dogside.”

At this time, Rader was almost forty-six years old. The urge to kill had been growing and had finally sent him out to prowl. He could no longer be satisfied with his motel parties, slick ad girls, and bondage toys. Over four years had passed since his last success. He needed to reaffirm himself. He prepared his hit kit.

Rader had seen Davis “not too far from where I lived. Not sure when I spotted Mrs. Davis, but it had to be on a drive by on 61st. It was in the fall of 1990. I didn’t usually prowl in the summer, because people have their windows open.” He watched her home many times and found that she fit his requirements. “I rode a bike over, hid it in a tree line south and cased the place. I found that she liked to read late at night in her bedroom on the southeast side. At first I thought she might be male, because she wore her hair short.”

Rader became obsessed. “I gathered up bondage gear and a camera, and hiked to a secluded area high on a hill overlooking the camp area. There with her on my mind I practiced barn bondage fantasy. I recall the colorful sumac that surrounded me. [I] took some pictures of me in fake hanging and bondage.”

During one episode, he spooked a cat in the house. “I was close to her bedroom, outside. There was a lot of noise as the startled cat hit the blinds. I quickly lay flat against the house, didn’t move for a long time, listening for any sounds. As cars drove north, I had to be careful with my profile against the house.”

But Davis was not the only project during this time.

“After casing, I drove to Augusta, Kansas, to prowl and troll that town. North of the city was PJ Plane, her husband a now-dead pilot, used to attend our church. She was attractive. At times I cased her place.

“In Fall River, I had the last Big Bondage Outdoor Event. I was camping out by myself. I was casing the Davis house for the second time. It appears that between jobs, I was always into Big Evil.”

Finally satisfied with Davis as a target, Rader set a date in January 1991.

“That particular day I had some commitments.” He would again use a Boy Scout outing as cover: their annual “Dead of Winter” campout at Harvey County Park West.

“I arrived early and got camp all set up. [When others arrived], I fabricated a story that I had to go back to town for something. I went to my parents’ house (they were on vacation) and dressed in my hit clothes in the basement. I blocked the basement light and hid my vehicle behind the garage. I checked my hit list and drove to the Baptist church on East 61st Street in Park City. The Scout troop had a place there where they store equipment, so I had a cover story in case someone happened by. I also had some Hidey Holes there. On Pancake Scout Day, I had stayed there overnight for morning set-up and did bondage in the basement Sunday School rooms. From there, I walked directly to her place.”

Rader cut through some fields and a cemetery to get to the Davis home, arriving before 11 p.m. He saw her inside, reading. He waited in the cold until she went to bed.

“I wanted to try a cat burglar approach, but that involves a lot of time and the cold forced me to hurry up. I found a cinder block in the backyard. After not finding a way in, I decided on a bold move but noisy. I threw the block through the sliding glass door. The ragged glass tore my windbreaker. She ran out and asked if I hit her house with a car. I used my ruse. I said, ‘No. I’m wanted. They’re after me. I need your house and your car and your money. I’m going to tie you up and I’m going to leave you. I’m going to be a little time in here, because I need to get in and warm up. But I’m going to take your car and some food.’

“This was the first time I carried a club, a pipe twelve inches long, filled with lead fishing sinkers. When she said I couldn’t be there, I said, ‘Ma’am, you’re going to have to cooperate. I’ve got a club, I’ve got a gun, I’ve got a knife, I suggest you do. You take your choice how you want it.’

“She said she was expecting someone. I could not believe my luck in these places! I’ve always got someone coming. I really wanted to spend some time with her, but I didn’t know if I had much time.

“I handcuffed her in the bedroom. She complained throughout. Once she was secured, I yanked the bedroom phone line out. I kind of talked to her, told her that I would like to get some food, get her keys to her car, and kind of rest assured. I talked with her a little bit and calmed her down. Then eventually I went back and checked out where the car was, simulated getting some food, probably drank some water the way I do in each home, kind of [acting] like I was leaving, then went back. I asked about her vehicle, and she said she had new shoes in it, would I take them out before taking her car?

“I brought the shoes back to the bedroom. My ruse was working. She believed I was going to retie her and leave. But as I retied her with pantyhose from her drawer, I think she realized I was going to kill her. This was part of the bondage ritual, the pantyhose connecting the feet to the hands. She was on her tummy, with me on top, wearing gloves. I worried about my sweat on the pillowcase (so I took it with me).”

Davis begged Rader not to kill her, but he slipped the pantyhose over her neck and strangled her. “And that was it with her. I didn’t take any pictures, because I thought, well, this guy is coming, I don’t want to be in this house. I need to get out of here. I put her in a blanket and drug her to her car, and put her in the trunk. That was not a smart move. The police could have connected her to Hedge. I opened the garage door, backed out, closed it and drove straight down Hillside to 53rd Street North, then west to Hydraulic, then south to the KDOT Lakes, where I had fished many times.”

Rader left the body there, in the bushes.

“I then drove over to Christ Lutheran Church, drove the car behind the evergreen trees, and hid odds and ends under the church’s shed. At the time, I realized my .22 auto was missing. I was distraught trying to figure out where my gun was. I drove to an area northwest of her place to get rid of bed items in a culvert. I also dropped off items on 69th—I don’t believe the police ever found them. Once at Davis’ place, I parked outside. I went back in the house, realized I had dropped [the gun] when I broke the plate glass window. It fell on the floor right there in the broken glass, and I found it. So that solved that problem. I was worried that glass might be in my shoe soles. They would have to be cleaned before driving my car.

“Anyway, I went back out, checked the car real quick and threw the keys up on top of the roof of her house. I kept the ignition and trunk keys.

As I walked back to my car, I buried them by a telephone pole (easy to find if needed).

“She had a big jewelry box. I just took the whole box. I also took a 35-mm camera. It was part of my keepsakes. I had a camera, but I wanted a stolen one for [taking] pictures of PJs. I took her driver’s license. I stored these items in a ditch that night, and later came and moved them. I threw away the box. I had a barn [in mind that] I wanted to use that night for pictures, but I couldn’t find it in the fog. It was very cold.

“As I approached Park City from the east, it was beginning to snow. I arrived at the church [where I had parked] and inside I changed my clothes. I checked my shoes for broken glass. As I drove away, I worried about the tracks in the parking lot. I drove south on Hydraulic to the KDOT Lakes, located her, and loaded her into my station wagon. I had spread a large plastic sheet inside to hold and conceal her. This was a weird feeling, to have a dead body in the same breathing air as me. What if I was stopped for some reason? I would have had to shoot it out and run, or just give up, my BTK days done! I did drive carefully, and drove back roads toward the north. Then finally I was on an old highway to the road to Sedgwick. The barn I had in mind was northwest of Sedgwick, located up on a hill. I had located it some time ago and used it for my fantasies. It had an open barn door I could drive in, and plenty of wood beams and barn themes. But the weather was an unforeseen problem. Driving in the snow and fog slowed me down and landmarks were hard to find. I forgot the barn and went to a bridge at 117th Street North.

“In some true crime or detective story, a Minotaur used culverts to hide bodies. It would be a fast way. Find one fairly short and big enough. Tie a rope on the ankles, weight the end, throw it to the other side, and pull the body through to the midway point.

“I moved her down the bank and under the bridge, out of the elements. My thinking was that I could come back for pictures when I had time and the weather was better. I had time constraints [that meant] I had to get back.

“I drove back to the camp, getting rid of crime-type items on the way. I used tumbleweeds to cover them in the ditch where I hid them. I left my shoes with these items, too. I had an emotional high, yet I was tired. I slept until breakfast time, started a fire, and waited for the troops. That afternoon, I took a long power nap in the station wagon.

“If I had taken a picture in the barn, it would have had a hanging theme: a hemp rope across a wooden beam, the noose, tight bonds on her (perhaps duct tape), and a clear plastic bag over her head. Before that, [I would take] a picture [of her] on a blanket or on the plastic sheet in the stalls.

“On the second night, I told the scout leader I had a bad headache and was going to Newton or home for some pills. I picked up the tumbleweed items and drove to Sedgwick first to see if there was any news. No news, so I drove to the rest stop to change clothes and use the bathroom.

“I had a close call. On the 19th, early in the morning, I pick[ed] up things up at the church and stopped and bought a newspaper. I stopped at a rest stop to change my clothes. Lo and behold, a highway patrolman came in and said he wanted to talk to me. I was on the toilet. I almost panicked, and ‘what if?’ came floating into my mind. I thought I had covered my tracks well.

“I believe I had my Magnum in the stall with me, but I figured he had already called my car plate in, so they would know of me. My change of clothes was on a bench outside the stall. I told the officer I would be finished in a moment or two. I washed my hands and explained that I was a Scout leader going to the Trapper camp. I asked if he knew what that was. He did. I said I had stopped at home for a change of clothes. He said they were stopping and interviewing anyone who seemed different, due to a recent crime. He gave no details. He bought my story and left to go to his car. I still had my Scout uniform.

“If he had searched my car, he would have found the jewelry box, the camera, and maybe the porcelain mask. I might have been caught and probably arrested. This was a heart stopper for me, yet I talked a good cover story. Perhaps the Magnum was my ace up the sleeve. Would he have been faster?

“I left the rest stop and went to where I had left Mrs. Davis. I had a hard time finding her, due to the storm the night before. I put the mask on her for a more female look and took pictures. I had bought it in Hays, KS, during the Census time.

“Then I drove to the old farmstead and got rid of her jewelry box and other items. I fantasized where I would have taken pictures of her there. I thought about bondage with her there, but thought I should get back.

“Since the police now had a description of me and had my tag number, I was no way going to keep anything connected to this case in my car or with me. I hid the rest in a plastic bag in a culvert. I threw my shoes away as I drove north to Newton. I had a meal and went back to the camp. Everyone was still up, around the campfire.

“The next day, as we dropped the kids off at the church, I saw a helicopter overhead. I knew who they were looking for. There was talk when they found her, that the Hedge and Davis murderers were the same person. There was even talk that BTK got Davis. Both were older females who lived alone. Both had worked downtown. Both were taken from their homes. Phone lines were cut on both places. Lingerie and jewelry were missing. Both were found with indications of bondage.

“I was nervous for a month or two. I took Davis clothes home to use. It was a different mask in the picture [of me], although it looked the same as the one used on Davis. I later threw the camera away, into the Chisholm Creek, my dumping area.”

Rader wrote about each step of this stalking and murder in his journal, but sent no letters to the press. “It must be kept secret forever,” he wrote. “I used PJ Dogside’s clothing for basement parties at my folks house and at homes [freelance] installing alarm systems.” He added the clothing to items from Vian, Fox, Hedge, and some failed projects, along with gloves, several masks, a teddy, and a wig he stole from a Boy Scout museum.

COMING DOWN

Still unable to find work, Rader thought again about suicide. “I don’t recall the year, but probably while I was unemployed, so it was probably after the Census of 1990. I was in my mid-forties, and this would have been in the winter or early spring, perhaps February or March of 1991. It was after BH#10 [Davis], for I had done it again. I also recall a spring lift for garden work and yard work, and helping out at the Andover Tornado disaster of April 1991. Faced with my sad dreams and lack of work, thoughts of ending my life were very strong. At another time, I had placed my .357 Magnum in my mouth, without shells, to feel the taste of the blue steel. I had also thought about hanging myself or using a hose from an exhaust pipe, with either me locked in the car trunk or in the car with the windows up. The gun

would end things quickly, but what a mess! My best thought [was that] I would just simply walk away and disappear. I did realize that suicide prevented insurance payment [to Paula], and the family would need the money. But whatever happened, I quickly reversed direction in a day or two. Probably [I had] something to do, or something happened that turned a positive spin on my mood. It could be my love for family, and [the idea of the] shock to them if I did it, or self-preservation overrode my suicide thoughts.”

In May 1991, Rader landed a full-time job. He became a compliance officer, enforcing Park City’s ordinances on pet control, litter, yard maintenance, and the like. He was glad to have a job, especially one so close to home, though he realized it was low-level law enforcement. Still, the locking file cabinet in his new office provided one more “Hidey Hole.”

Rader also established several other new hiding places.

“In the crawlspace, I insulated the floor joint, and in between [was] a perfect place to hide material. I wanted to make a concrete Hidey Hole in the ground under the house, but it didn’t work. Mold and dampness got in. I then put a fake bottom in the linen closet.

“In one of the junk boxes, I would throw in my bondage stuff: a hook, clamps, screw eyes, tape, cords, chains, and all kinds of items. For example, I made a pipe device to spread the legs and would keep them apart using simple plumbing supplies and U-bolts, to fit around the ankle. This sort of item, taken apart, would be fine in a junk box. I could quickly gather it up and take it with me. But if it was found, it was nothing but a pipe and U-bolts. Old coffee cans were my favorite storage area. I could enclose different kinds of tape rolls.

“Back in the shed, I would store things in a red ADT cabinet. It had tape, rubber handcuffs, rope, dog collars, webbing, chains, pulleys, wooden dowel rods and screw eyes. I used dowel rods a lot in bondage for the parties.

“I had intended to enclose the tree house I built for the kids to include false bottoms and Hidey Holes in the walls and floors, like the Holmes castle. Under the tree house, I had a trashcan full of women’s garments. Most was from Paula and Kerri cleaning out closets. I was going to use the lingerie.

“I and Paula had planned on redoing the house, building a rec room and attached garage. I wanted her to have a garage for the wintertime. It

would have a shop and an attached greenhouse—a perfect place for my deviant mind to create B/D items.

“I used culverts around the area. I also had a Hidey Hole at church, behind the furnace room. I built a lot of my devices at home, while doing other home projects. For example, I had taken a window out at one time, and covered the hole. I put the window in my shed and practiced on it with a glasscutter and tape.

“I also used a safe-deposit box at a bank at Central and Hillside. I believe I used the name ‘Lawrence Williams,’ [which was] my Dad’s middle name and the name of my older cousin, [coupled with] with my brother’s name. I paid for one year at a time, dropping by occasionally to check stuff out for motel parties, or add [something].

“There was an old abandoned farm machine, too, a seed holder. I used it a lot. I had a rain-tight lid unit. I had nook-and-crannies in [various] places. Sometimes I had wired my old camping gear boxes to hide items.

“To keep all these places in mind, I used a checklist on 3x5 note cards, so I could see where everything went. I will bet that somewhere out there, there is a Slick Ad cache still waiting to be found.”

COMPLIANCE

“As I started to work for Park City, May of 1991, Officer Zickel fingerprinted me. I was always very nervous on [being] fingerprinted. I didn’t think I had left any, because I wore gloves and always cleaned up, but now my prints were on record. He mentioned [that] my education looked good for [being a] compliance officer. Of the people [I knew] in law enforcement, he was very smart. He and I had a good working relationship. I often wondered after he found out about me—‘Wow! I fingerprinted him and worked with him, not knowing!’

“I revamped the program there [in the Park City Office], set up new animal control laws and enforced them, and set up professional standards and training. I started code enforcement on junk cars, trashing the yard, unmowed grass, etc. The position became more professional throughout the years.”

Rader’s children were now sixteen and thirteen, and he and Paula had become increasingly involved in their church. He assisted with maintenance

and helped people in need.

“After Davis, the desire seemed to go away. I had finally found a good job, and was busy with the kids and home life. But that cycle started again. It seemed like 1994–95, I started looking. PJ Webb was in 1995, an impulsive BE in the middle of the day. It was on Ravena Street in Park City.”

Rader continued to savor the photos of his victims, and the route between Park City and the animal control shelter (where he took stray dogs to be put down) provided the chance to watch for potential projects. “A lot of the PJs covered over many years, and they started forming around Park City and my trips to the shelter. [But I] just didn’t have a good cover anymore or the freedom to move about at night.”

One project that still puzzles Rader is PJ Doc. “Somewhere between Davis BH #10 and me being arrested, PJ Doc was in the stalk-and-plan stages. I had already prowled. She was the doctor who had made home visits to me when I had ear problems. But, what bothers me is why I would want to hurt her, or kill her, as she tried to help me. Perhaps she was just a BDSM symbol. She had hurt and comforted me. (Side note: I recall dominant females in life and seem to work them into PJ or fantasies.) She was also a good school mom, and active in 4-H. I liked her daughters, but here’s the catch: she was dominant in her family. This may be another key [to my aggression].

“If I thought the police getting close, I threw things away. It was convenient to take them to the crematory.

“Over the years following PJ Dogside, there were other PJs. ‘PJ Tube,’ ‘PJ Webb,’ ‘PJ Twin Peaks,’ ‘PJ Music,’ ‘PJ Clip’ and ‘PJ Spider.’ This last one was a BE, where I entered and waited, but no one came. Most of these were in the Park City area, or north of Wichita. In the grand scheme, there were really no off years for me, as people believe. I was always on the prowl. I just had no hits.”

Rader had watched the media coverage of Bundy’s execution in 1989, and followed the discovery in Wisconsin of Jeffrey Dahmer’s cannibalistic murders of young men during the summer of 1991. It irked him to see a similar fame elude BTK. He had held an entire city in terror, so why wasn’t BTK on all the lists of infamous killers? Like Jack the Ripper, the Zodiac, and the Green River Killer, BTK deserved to be on the most notorious list: the ones who got away.

NARCISSISTIC IMMUNITY

Offenders like Rader can display both an enduring resilience and an apparent naïveté. Since they have gotten away with murder, they believe they are smart enough not to get caught. Rader shares this trait with Bundy, Holmes, Glatman, and others. It's called narcissistic immunity (NI), or "Teflon narcissism." NI often shows up in the most audacious and predatory people—repeat offenders who take significant risks. They have a talent for rebounding from setbacks because they're so certain of their invulnerability—even when the evidence is clearly against them. Perhaps NI is a survival mechanism. Some experts think it's a fixation from childhood, when the child felt special, pampered, and grandiose. In this view, the narcissist never grows up and remains emotionally immature.

The peculiar resilience of NI derives from arrogance, a sense of entitlement, and disdain. While ordinary narcissists possess a smug sense of superiority that allows them to thoughtlessly exploit others for their own gain, some killers go so far as to believe that their victims were "privileged" to have been in their orbit. This attitude is more than just overblown self-esteem. It is a clinical disorder that distorts social reality, because excessive narcissists exist inside a thick cocoon of their own concerns. The driving force is a need for complete control.

Such killers believe that they have a special destiny, and that they are smarter than anyone investigating them. They pride themselves on their modes of deception and manipulation.

However, they need others to affirm their superiority. In addition, they can get defensive and needy, which damages their inflated sense of self. When they retaliate over slights or criticism, the results can be deadly to their victims. But such actions can also expose the killers more than they realize. The narcissist's addiction to self can be his greatest strength, in some contexts, but also his greatest weakness. Investigators count on the inevitable errors that arise from the latter.

12 LOOKING BACK

What are those lizards that change? A chameleon!
Dennis Rader

In 1995, Rader turned fifty. His son had graduated from high school, while his daughter had another year to go. The Park City job was going well.

“I quit buying detective magazines when they dropped the B/D women from the covers. I still read books about serial killers if they related to the style I was into. I always cut photos out of ads from places like Dillard’s and J.C. Penney’s. A normal person would scan the Sunday ads for bargain sales, and I did too, but I was also scanning for particular ones to add to my collection. I was always cutting out ads for outdoor equipment, fishing and travel, so no one noticed [when I clipped something else]. As the ads were added to the pile, I would take the bottom ones and cut out the female models. When Paula was at work, I cleared the kitchen table to go through a stack. If the trimmings were too sexy or questionable, I took the trash away from the house. A lot was burned in the animal shelter crematory.

“At first, I placed them in loose-leaf notebooks, and color-coded them by race, color of hair, and age. Young to preteen, for example, was yellow, and teenage to twenty was red. Older women were blue. I would mount the picture on a 3x5 card, and often carry these cards to work, as a ‘Girl of the Day’ or a Ride-along, like a teenager would carry a rock star picture. I kept them hidden in my bedroom. A lot of the time, I made up the name, fantasy, title, and expression in the morning. I would view them in the bathroom in the mornings and evenings. I also had bedroom fantasy ads, while I dressed in the morning. I had a large one I kept hidden in the closet.

“Being as detailed as I am, it got to the point where I spent a lot of time making sure they all had proper dates. I think I started maybe 1995–96. The pile grew year after year. I’d miss some days, but would then start up again. I started digitally downloading the better ones.”

Rader’s favorite fantasy at this time involved a mother-daughter duo. He called it Project Twin Peaks. “The mother would be blonde and the daughter, 10–12 years old, would have long blonde hair.” He envisioned a

room where this girl would be tied to a bed and would have an intercom that would expose her to her mother being tortured in another room. Rader would go into the room every now and then, making her wonder what was going to happen to her. It was psychological torture for a pretty girl, among the worst he could think of. He wanted her to be terrified. He had a pair in mind, although the daughter was older than he had envisioned.

“I went to their house, east of Hydraulic, and watched them, but whenever I peeked through windows, the girl and her mother were never in the same room. I also had a hard time figuring out how to get in, although I cased it several times. I was running with no headlights on and was nearly spotted by a sheriff’s patrol. This was a miss.”

In 1996, Rader’s father died from cancer. Rader was devastated. As the oldest son, he took over his mother’s care. She remained in the house on Seneca Street, close by, but the added duties curtailed his prowling.

DARK SIDE NEWS

Rader was happy to see a true crime book on Harvey Glatman published in 1998, especially since its title, *The Rope*, captured the aspect of the murders that he most appreciated. That same year brought news from New Mexico that caught his attention.

Police responding to a 911 call in the town of Truth or Consequences found a nude young woman who claimed to have escaped captivity. She told officers that the couple who had held her had a trailer full of weapons, bondage devices, and torture videos, and that the man boasted of having killed other women. The captive had been tortured, raped, and threatened with death. This report led to the arrest of David Parker Ray and Cindy Hendy.

The woman who had escaped was not lying. Next to the trailer where Ray and Hendy lived was another trailer they called the “Toy Box.” It was devoted to sexual torture. Ray had drawn pictures of what he planned to do to their victims, and to accomplish these crimes he had gathered surgical instruments and medical manuals specifically devoted to female anatomy. The Toy Box also contained sexual implements, such as dildos, belts, and whips, as well as a home video of the couple applying these implements to a woman who screamed in agony.

Ray had rigged the trailer with a series of chains, shackles, and pulleys. Among his texts was a copy of *American Psycho* by Bret Easton Ellis, a novel that details the violent bloodbaths a psychopathic man inflicts on victims as a stress reliever. Ray had written directions for how to handle a sex slave, including methods of psychological torture. Verbal abuse was part of every move, and it was important to “Keep her off balance.” He also had a list of sixteen techniques for brainwashing someone; these included isolation, fear tactics, abuse, and occasional small favors.

After the incident was reported in the newspapers, a second woman came forward with a similar story of abuse, then a third.

In exchange for a reduced sentence, Hendy told police about fourteen murders. She said Ray had disposed of the bodies in lakes and ravines around New Mexico, but authorities failed to locate any of them. Under questioning, Dennis Roy Yancy confessed that he and Ray’s daughter, Glenda Jean, had helped to torture his former girlfriend, Marie Parker, to death.

Ray would eventually go through several trials. He died of a heart attack just prior to starting his sentence. The headlines intrigued Rader. “I remember the trailer. It had a unique name. He did things that interested me, binding and torturing women. This was the same [wave] length I was on. That’s the Holmes’ castle on wheels.”

But the news regarding another case made Rader fidget. On November 30, 2001, Gary Leon Ridgway was arrested in Seattle. Linked through DNA to several 1980s murder victims, Ridgway was identified as the infamous Green River Killer. He confessed to more than sixty murders. (In 2003, he would receive life sentences in forty-eight cases, with one more added later.)

If DNA could crack a case like that, Wichita investigators thought, it also might solve the BTK murders. A new team led by Lieutenant Kenneth Landwehr went over the open cases. They knew of at least seven, and had suspicions in a half dozen others.

Among these was the case of Sherry Baker, a twenty-three-year-old student at WSU who was murdered in November 1974. She had been found gagged, bound, stabbed, and lying facedown on the floor. Another was Denise Rathburn, who had lived one block from the Oteros on North Edgemoor. Rathburn disappeared on November 26, 1977. Her body was found on December 10 (one day after Nancy Fox’s body was discovered),

under a small bridge on 133rd Street, between Hydraulic and Hillside. A third woman, thirty-one-year-old Linda Shawn Casey, had been bound, beaten, sexually assaulted, and stabbed in her North Spruce Street apartment. In addition, some officers believed that Marine Hedge and Dolores Davis also were BTK victims.

The investigative team had biological evidence from the Nancy Fox and Otero homicides, and a geographical profile that made it seem likely that BTK lived or worked near the crime scenes. But Landwehr wanted something more concrete before submitting the samples to a DNA analysis.

Rader understood that he was in danger. Not only had Vicki Wegerle scratched him, but he had also left semen in two places. He decided to dump some evidence and place his photos, drawings, and writings onto computer disks. He couldn't destroy everything that linked him to the crimes because he wanted to leave a "legacy." After he was dead, he wanted people to know that *he*, Dennis Rader, had been the BTK Strangler. In his fantasies, he got some satisfaction from imagining that at least they would know how clever he had been. Unlike the Zodiac and Jack the Ripper, he would not simply get away with his crimes; in his case, everyone would know exactly *who* had gotten away. He began to plan for an end to his double life, selecting strategic items to throw away or to keep.

"My last motel party was in Dodge City in the spring of 2004. I cleaned up and threw away tons of stuff, as I was beginning to down size."

But then something in the news caught his attention. This changed everything.

IT'S BEEN A LONG TIME

In January 2004, *Wichita Eagle* reporter Hurst Laviana published a thirty-year retrospective of the Otero slaughter and other unsolved murders associated with BTK. The story mentioned that few people were even aware of the old BTK cases and added that a local author, Robert Beattie, was writing a book about them.

Two months went by.

The police report states that on March 19, 2004, Laviana received a letter from "Bill Thomas Killman," 1684 S. Oldmanor, Wichita. The letter had been mailed on March 17, the anniversary of Shirley Vian's 1977

murder. Inside the envelope were three Polaroid photographs of a bound woman lying on a floor, in different poses, and a photocopy of Vicki Wegerle's driver's license. The photos appeared to be of Wegerle. A series of letters appeared at the top of the page, with the BTK symbol in the right-hand corner. The return address was that of a vacant building, and there was no directory listing for Bill Thomas Killman, but the Polaroids were real. No police photos had been taken at the scene. Whoever had taken *these* photos had killed Wegerle.

The *Wichita Eagle* ran a story about BTK claiming credit for an eighth murder. National news outlets showed interest. The FBI sent a profiler to work with the local law enforcement team. No one could figure out what the series of letters meant, but scrapings from under Wegerle's fingernails had yielded DNA from an unknown male.

Rader felt like he had a new lease on life. Now fifty-nine, he wanted to squeeze more excitement from his notoriety. "This was my fantasy. 'I'm back' to tell the world, the games begin! I left no doubt to those who received and looked over this missive, it was BTK, using a ruse. I looked up the name Killman in a cross-directory at work. He happened to have an address of Old Manor, another connection to my first serious move, back in 1973. It was my first major BE, near Oteros' place, right after the Cessna layoff. I posted the letter in March, and hoped with 3/17, another connection would be made. It's all connected!

"I [had] kept the photos of Mrs. Wegerle in my dark green box in my Hidey Hole, in the false bottom drawer of the cabinet. I had reviewed it only at motel parties. That camera was the one I used on myself in self-bondage, [equipped] with a special cord to tip the release button. She [had] scratched me on the face. I still have a small scar. I wondered if the police [had] started connecting the dots with DNA from her fingernails to other possible BTK [cases].

"The code I placed on the top was German fractional, very simple. You line up the alphabet in columns and put your code word in the first line. It was a message to the author, 'Let Beatty know for his book.'

"The cat-and-mouse [game] gave me an adrenalin rush or high. It also set a stage for the police to know that a serious Minotaur was in their midst. The actor that plays upon a stage, I'm sure, has a high rush—part of the reason that person does it, although they like the way the crowd reacts to

them. Being a center [of attention] was just a good feeling. I liked to be wanted or important or a leader of the pack.”

Rader prepared more packages to send. It was fun to create devious puzzles for others to solve.

On May 4, 2004, KAKE-TV received an envelope from Thomas B. Kingman, of 408 Clayton Street, containing a complex, full-page word puzzle, photocopies of two handmade ID cards, and a photocopy of a “Special Officer” badge. (Around the same time, a postal employee found a police badge in a postal drop box.) One of the cards bore the name of Francis Strong, a foreman for Southwestern Bell; the ID photo was blacked out. The package also included a piece of paper with chapter headings for “The BTK Story.” These were similar to what an online writer had posted about the unsolved Wichita murders.

- 1.A Serial Killer is Born
- 2.Dawn
- 3.Fetish
- 4.Fantasy World
- 5.The Search begins
- 6.BTK’s Haunts
- 7.PJ’s
- 8.MO-ID-Ruse
- 9.Hits
- 10.Treasured Memories
- 11.Final Curtain Call
- 12.Dusk
- 13.Will There Be More?

Law enforcement deciphered the word puzzle, which was divided into three sections: MO, ID, and RUSE (one of the chapter headings). Words related to these items were found in each section. It was clear that BTK was telling them something about himself. It was *not* clear if any of it was the truth.

“KAKE-TV was a favorite media spot for me,” said Rader. “They seemed to cover the BTK [case] very well. Later I thought CBS did a better job. I had planned on leaving a cat-and-mouse calling card on their main door.

“Much like Bill Thomas Killman, Thomas B. Kingman refers to BTK. I bought the badge at a pawnshop. I believe I had it in my pocket with Vian.

“As I was closing things down, I [had] started the ‘BTK Story’ and used 13 chapters, usually a reference to an unlucky number, but not for me. It

had a 3 in it.

“With the IDs, at ADT we had worked closely with the telephone people. His [Francis Strong’s] card was in a business card section at work. I used it, but I had never met the man. I picked up the school business card while looking for work in 1974–75, at their employment office. I kept the card in case it was useful.

“I dropped off the badge after mailing that MO-ID-Ruse in a mailbox in Wichita downtown. I mailed the missive on East Douglas Street, off Hillside area, an area I had prowled before, and had used the store to photocopy for cat-and-mouse.

“The puzzle used 3s: MO, ID, Ruse. The number 622 [in the puzzle] was related to the ID cards. By chance, it was part of my home address. I didn’t realize it. But it’s not the full address.

“Many people feel it was Beattie’s book that started me down the trail. It was a combination of events; his book was just one of them. He had planned on bringing it out, I believe in April 2004. I had for many years wanted to take my secret murders, clippings, drawings, and stories, and put them into a book or story format. They were well hid in the house, in my ‘mother lode.’ In the hallway between the bedroom and bathroom was a linen closet with a false bottom under the bottom drawer.

“The attached shed to the house had a box built around the dryer, on top of that was a piece of plywood, another Hidey Hole. An old ADT red box housed my bondage material.

“With thirty years of material and growing older each year, I knew I needed to get it out of the house. My BTK years as a young serial killer were done. Although like any older man, he still dreams of the day when he was strong and masculine, when he could whip the world. He [had] once brought terror to Wichita. With the news of Beattie’s book, I thought it was an opportunity to have some fun, like a chess game, cat-and-mouse with the police. At the same time, I would reduce my mother lode. I had planned to put images and articles on computer disks and store them in a bank deposit box. But I could send the evidence items in packages.

“My office at work was a good place to do this. I had access to a computer, a printer, a file cabinet, and a camera. As I started this process, I thought of what would really throw the police and county into a disastrous state of worry. A murder not associated with me [Wegerle] should stir the

pot up, and at the same time show that maybe Beattie didn't have his story right. This would help Sedgwick County know the real story.

"I had to do a little homework, so I visited the Vian neighborhood. I drove through it a couple of times. With the fast-approaching anniversary of the Vian murder, I decided to use a code (German fractional) and photocopy Vicki Wegerle's driver's license to get the pot boiling in a hurry. I made the photocopies at work, doing it over and over to make it less clear and harder for the police to track down [through the copier]. Using gloves, I put it into the envelope. I trimmed the areas where I had to touch with my bare hands. I used glue and a wet towel, not saliva, so no DNA on the envelope.

"I dropped that hot information off at a post office mailbox at Woodlawn and 13th after Brian and I met to watch a movie at Warren East. He drove his car home. After being careful that no one was watching, I dropped it.

"This certainly stopped Beattie's planned release. His book is pretty close, but some facts and details are wrong. At one time, I wanted to find out where he lived and do some cat-and-mouse correspondence with him, but it never happened. People praise him for my surfacing, but it was a combination of events that contributed to my final rise and fall."

FIELD GRAMS

A man going to work on June 13, 2004, discovered a package in a clear plastic bag taped to a stop sign on 1st and Kansas. The package was a brown envelope labeled "BTK Field Gram." It contained three photocopied sheets of paper that bore reduced images. Two featured chapters for "Death on a Cold January Moring [sic]," with a drawing of a nude, bound woman hanging from a rope. The drawing was captioned, "The Sexual Thrill is my Bill." The third page repeated the list of thirteen chapters for the "BTK Story," with "ID-MO-Ruse" blacked out. The now-familiar BTK symbol appeared on the bottom right corner.

The narrative, with numerous grammatical errors, referred to the Otero murders. It appeared to have been copied from a typewritten story, dated February 3, 1974. Its author described a long history of sexual fantasies about torturing females, as well as the way he had stalked the Oteros and planned their murders. The primary target had been Julie, the mother. He

had planned to force her into a car, bind her, and drive her into the countryside, where he would rape and strangle her, then put the body into a culvert. But he had decided simply to enter the house. He had been nervous but alert and in control, and thought of himself as “Rex.” He described his actions in the house as he bound, gagged, and killed the family, affirming a long-held fantasy of having a pretty woman bound and under his control. During boyhood, he wrote, the fantasy had been enough. “He could play with himself and think and immediately have an ejection.” Then his fantasies boiled over, sending him out “to take his prey.” In detail, he told of the chaos as the males thrashed around with their heads in plastic bags and the females screamed and cried. Using a clove-hitch garrote, he had killed the mother in front of the girl, then looked at the bodies in curiosity. “Never really seeing dead people before, this is murder victim.”

Then he had taken Josephine to the basement to kill her. The idea that he was the first man to see her breasts excited him. Afterward, he checked the house “for mistakes.” He felt supremely happy over his accomplishment. “The dream at last came true.”

“There was an emotional rush in doing the cat-and-mouse,” says Rader. “I believe alpha people need to show off in some manner. It may be a top CEO, a political leader, military general, an artist, an author, and so on. BTK could not talk directly to anyone, thus cat-and-mouse was an outlet, and part of the spy-code theme as well. My showing off may not be direct [i.e., tied to an identifiable source], but it worked. It was a way to turn up the heat. Fiction was added to form a watered-down novella.

“I left the package at 1st and Kansas. This symbolic meaning was important to me. We live in a symbolic world. I didn’t pick the spot just because it was handy; there was a purpose. First, I believe the Clutter [murders were] the first of this kind of [mass family] murder. All the police reports to media said hinted in that direction. So, *first in Kansas*, and the Stop sign was ‘Stop and look, people of Kansas.’ The pole was the male symbol. I picked a #3 type date, attached the package on June 12 (6–12, refer to 3s). It was not related to my daughter’s birthday. It just happened that way. The package was wrapped in plastic and duct tape, a symbol of bondage and staple items in BTK hit kit. By posting it here, I figured an amateur would handle it before the police. That would destroy key evidence.

“The ‘BTK Field Gram’ [is] like a telegram: it’s short, yet has important news. Coding from Morse Code. In the cat-and-mouse game, I envisioned the chapter of BTK hit, CH 1 being the Oteros. The picture was probably from a slick ad. I would find one I liked, or pencil the back side, and trace the outline on white paper. Using pencil or pen, I would start the sketch and add BTK details. I would color it and write a BTK epigram—like ‘The sexual thrill is my bill.’ Being bound, under distress, and gagged was the main theme in a lot of my sketches.”

BTK’s next communication would carry a warning: the fun and games were over. He had spotted his next victim and was considering a date for a hit.

13 GREETINGS TO MY FANS

Factor X is the quest to manipulate and dominate. Somewhere in a barn, possibly being tied up in a pretend jail. It's the same as a drug or alcohol. All the devil's playmate. You profile a victim, get obsessed, and violence goes unchecked.

Dennis Rader

Among the things that Rader has addressed in our correspondence is the idea that his notes to the press were his way of communicating with his “fan club.” He developed the notion that he had to keep giving them what they wanted (and stated that this became his Achilles’ heel). No doubt he derived this idea, in part, from the way some serial killers have become celebrities.

Several authors have addressed this topic, including Joseph Fisher, who has lived in two communities in which serial murders occurred. He describes the public’s response in *Killer Among Us: Public Reactions to Serial Murder*. Rader certainly paid attention to public response, not only as he read about infamous killers such as Ted Bundy and Son of Sam during the 1970s, but also as he read about the reaction of Wichita’s residents to his own murders. (He was neither surprised nor dismayed, as some have reported.)

Fisher lived in Ann Arbor, Michigan, when seven coed killings occurred between 1967 and 1969. He was living in Folly Beach, South Carolina, in 1974, when three teenage girls became victims (and three more were near-victims). He writes that a preoccupation with the killer could be all-consuming.

In Ann Arbor, the killer seemed able to strike and disappear, despite a community on high alert. One victim had even written to her parents that she was being careful on the very day she accepted a ride on a motorcycle from a complete stranger—a man who would murder her later that same day.

The police response was massive, drawing together six different law enforcement organizations. A killer who paid attention to the news would have seen front-page coverage with bold headlines and photos of victims, along with opinion pieces and letters to the editor from terrified citizens.

Rader would have been gratified by such a “fan club,” but he didn’t have one, as neither law enforcement nor the media in Wichita had initially responded as he had hoped. His early communications had been intended to guide them. The second round, starting in 2004, was intended to “stir the pot,” as he put it.

Rader wanted more than simple notoriety, however. He thought of himself as a supernatural creature, like a werewolf, and wanted someone with extraordinary powers to pay attention. This would up the stakes. When FBI profilers offered their opinions, their efforts elevated the status of the BTK investigation.

Fisher recalls that, because of the killings, some people in Ann Arbor and Folly Beach felt the need to talk to one another, as if social contact conveyed immunity. Some unknowingly talked *with* the killers. Others shut themselves away. In Wichita, Kerri Rader had described how unsafe she felt when a close neighbor, Marine Hedge, was murdered. *The killer had been in their suburb, on their street!* Kerri’s fear affected Rader in two ways: one was empowering, the other left him with a sense of concern that his daughter was scared. “Such madness, jumping from cube to cube!” he comments.

In his own home, Rader remained above suspicion—even when his wife noticed that his misspellings were similar to those in BTK’s notes. She had heard reporters warn that this killer would seem ordinary. But who would believe that they actually lived in the same house with him? Or worshipped in the same church? That summer, the congregation at Christ Lutheran elected Rader as vice president, and many fully expected him to become president. He seemed to them a reliable, helpful member who lived up to Christian ideals.

Knowing that BTK was Wegerle’s killer, Detective Landwehr authorized the analysis of the other BTK-related samples at the Sedgwick County Regional Forensic Science Center, confirming the linkage with Fox and the Oteros. He also began to address BTK directly during news conferences, playing to BTK’s ego. Rader noticed the strategy.

“I wasn’t afraid of him,” Rader says. “He talked softly, but I had more rapport with LaMunyon [the former police chief]. I did trust [Landwehr], but I felt like I was always one step ahead.”

JAKY

On Saturday morning, July 17, 2004, a library employee emptied the book return box in downtown Wichita. A plastic bag lay at the bottom, with papers inside. He saw the initials BTK and called the police.

The police report states that the bag contained five pieces of paper, including a “BTK Flash Gram.” There was a two-page story titled, “Jaky,” ending with the familiar BTK symbol. Then there were photocopies of pictures of an adult male in bondage. In the story, BTK took credit for the death of a boy named Jake Allen.

Jake Allen was a nineteen-year-old high school valedictorian with a bright future. He had no enemies and was considered a responsible person, although he had been in trouble once for underage drinking. On July 4, 2004, he told a friend that he would call her the next day, declining an invitation to do something with her. Less than eight hours later, he was found dead, bound with baling wire to the railroad tracks east of Wellington, Kansas, thirty-five miles south of Wichita. His black sweatshirt and red sweatpants were discovered down the track.

Investigators guessed that either he had been mixed up in something that got him killed, or he had killed himself. If it were the latter, he had shielded everyone he knew from his apparent depression and the plan to end his life. To have been suicidally depressed over some minor bit of trouble, however, seemed unlikely. There were plenty of “buffering factors,” as suicidologists call them, that would far outweigh the negative. His parents had a thriving hog and grain business, and had raised Jake in the Catholic faith. He had five siblings. His graduating class was small (fourteen), he played in the band, had good friendships, was in the National Honor Society, and enjoyed acting. He also liked sports and was reportedly easygoing about things that would have bothered most guys. He was creative and resilient.

In the letter, BTK claimed that he had to stop working on his own story so he could take care of Jake Allen. “I was so excited about this incident that I had to tell the story.” Supposedly, BTK met Allen through medical connections and computer chats and persuaded him to present himself as bait—so they could catch BTK. “Jaky had fantasies about Sexual Masturbation in unusual; ways with Bondage and Homosexual thrills . . . While I peck this out, my Sparky is going hard.” He wrote that police

should have checked Allen for semen, and described how the vibration of trains on the track excited him. Ominously, he added that he had spotted an older female who lived alone, as well as a “latch key kid,” and warned that, while he was older now and not as sharp as he once was, “fall or winter would be just right for the HIT. Got to do it this year or next! Number X, as time is running out for me.” He would “have to condition myself carefully.” As apparent proof of the bondage games he had played with “Jakey,” he included photos of a hooded figure in bondage in the woods.

Rader wanted to see if the Wichita police would take the bait. When they did, he was delighted. In the end, however, investigators concluded that BTK was lying. There was no indication on Allen’s computer that he had talked with anyone about BTK or S&M games. As unlikely as it seemed, Allen had committed suicide.

None of this mattered to Rader, as his purpose had been to get a reaction. “I posted the Jakey letter under the cover story of errands on a Saturday morning. For each package, once I had the copy to be sent, I trimmed the edges down, wearing gloves, and with gloves placed it in envelope that you could buy anywhere. [I would] either type the address on the envelope or use black letters [perhaps meaning block letters]. Everything [was] done with gloves. [For the] Stamp, I used [a] moist cloth to wet them or [used] self-sticky ones. The latter stamp [was available] in 2000–2005. [Sometimes] I used a theme, like a ‘railroad train’ or something that could relate to power or [the] theme of the letter. Once everything [was] together, I would pick a mailbox and with gloves remove the mailing envelope from another envelope and mail.

“I did carry a pager, if Park City needed me for emergencies, but Saturday mornings were mine, while Paula was busy. I handled the ‘Jakey’ package with gloves. The telegram name, ‘Flash’ meant ‘very important,’ like news headlines or a newsbreak. I saw the article about him in the *Wichita Eagle*. I meant no disrespect to his family. I only used him as a symbol to stir the pot. I used some male slick ads to draw off. It was the first time I used male slick ads. It was the perfect time to use my vivid imagination to stir the pot.

“I threw in the latch key kid to excite the police and public. At one time during my trolling days, there was a female high school girl that got off the bus and walked to an address north of 37th Street North. I did think

about being in the house when she came home one day. But over the years, I focused on a female worker that had a very rigid routine.

“With this letter, I let the police know that I was older but perhaps smarter with age, even if they didn’t know my age. At the age of 59, I was pretty old for a serial killer to be on the prowl.”

The Jakey letter displays Rader’s need to attach himself to events that evoked his erotic drive. “Death on a railroad track reminded me of child[hood] fantasies.” Because questions surrounded the manner of Allen’s death, Rader was able to twist it to his sadistic advantage. He also noticed the news of a murder in Benton, northeast of Wichita, on September 22: Carol Mould, forty-six, had been fatally strangled with a cord in her home and the house set on fire. Rader later told police that he had considered using this crime in his cat-and-mouse game, but he left it alone. Despite Landwehr’s efforts to bait BTK, he did not communicate again until October.

PROJECT BOARDWATER

Rader decided to look for another victim. “I was wanting to stop at maybe 12. That’s as far as I go.” He made his choice for number 11 and set the date for October 22, “the weekend before Halloween. This was appropriate for the 11th hour, a signal of great mystery.” (During his post-arrest police interrogation, Rader said that his target was a “broad” who lived on Hydraulic, hence Broadwater. He later wrote that the school board was located across the street from her, so he named her Boardwater.)

“I had wished to taper off. I was older, but this was a sexual fantasy, an obsession, a late-night video re-ramping through my mind. How many days and nights I thought about this PJ and would I do it? I dreamed about it and worked out the details. I had many safety releases, like the Slick Ad Girls, and I thought they were enough to prevent me from fulfilling those dreams. The question remains, would I have pursued this all the way if not arrested?

“The first attempt was 10/22/2004. As I drove back and forth to the Wichita Animal Shelter on North Hillside, I watched the addresses along Hydraulic. The houses were set back a little. One house had a female, a high school girl, and a male at one time. But he disappeared or left.

“I drove by this house all the time, so I had the chance to observe the people who lived there. All of these houses faced east, across from the U.S.

259 School District main building. Her house was sort of isolated from everyday traffic. North of the house was the Chisholm Creek, the middle branch. (I had used that bridge as a dumping ground for victim items, like Otero's watch and Davis's camera.) It was close to the KDOT Lakes, where Davis was dropped off and picked up. So, I knew the area well. The female worked at a machine shop on Hillside, and drove a white van, probably her work vehicle. As the days passed, I would write in a logbook the dates and times of her routines. She had a perfect pattern. She was a brunette, a bit heavy, medium height, in her 30s or 40s. She worked at a machine shop on the corner of Hillside and 37th, just north of the shelter. So easy for me to stalk.

"She would get home around noon for lunch and left at 12:25 or 12:30. That was my timeframe. The plan was to park at the lake, bike to her place around 10:30 a.m., and lift the bike and gear over the fence. I would break in and wait for her. [This would be] another terrible murder and encore for the police. [I would] set a fire [and] make it look like someone else did it. Then, using her truck, I would take my bike and gear back to the lake and pick up my vehicle. The fire would burn slowly, candles down to cellophane wrap and chemical-soaked rags. The fires would start while I was many miles away. She was the only PJ I had on my mind the last few years.

"There was also a high school girl that got off the bus in the afternoons. I had thought about trying for her, but I finally started focusing on the older female. Around noontime on October 22 was a perfect time for me, with the cover story of a campout, organized by my brother at Woodson Lake. I could say to anyone who wondered that I took off early on Friday for the weekend. Boardwater drove a white van, probably a work truck. Part of my after-hit plan was to get away in this vehicle. I had cased the place on at least three occasions, [and] on two of them I was actually in the backyard and around the house outside. I also drove in the driveway and knocked on the door, with a ruse ready. So, I sort of knew or could picture the house layout. This helped me to build a workable fantasy, which I went over and over, working out the details and getting excited.

"On Friday, October 22. I packed up my Ford 150 with my hit kit, bike, and gear I was going to use on her at the house. There was a last-minute rush to get the gear. In my mind, I hid the bike in the backyard behind the wooden fence. I broke glass and opened the rear porch door (a

covered porch to hide me). Awaiting her inside, I was going to hit her over the head with a potato sock behind the ear (idea from a Minotaur novel), handcuff her in her bedroom, undress her except her underclothes, bind her with duct tape, and gag her. I had visions of tying her up in a chair. I had some drawings where models were tied and strangled in chairs. I think she had a daughter and I thought about getting them both.”

Rader would tell police that, “I thought about having anal sex with her.” (He told me that was not something he actually wanted to do. It was just a fantasy.)

“I had tools that I had brought along to rig up a hoist in the doorframe of her bedroom. (I had purchased one of those lightweight hoists you can lift up to 500 pounds.) At the bottom I was going to screw in an eyebolt for a rope attachment. Once she was secure, upside down, I would place a plastic bag over her head, loop it tight on the eyebolt, remove her underwear, take pictures, and have self-gratification. I had actually saved up my seminal fluid, several small containers (in the home freezer, hid in the back with frozen fish bait). This I was going to spread on her and her bed, a LOT! (Unaware of DNA being tracked at the time on me.) Well, I was an unknown person to the police. If they found any, they could match what they had at other places, but [they would have] no suspect.

“This was supposed to be my opus, my grand finale, and to make it different, I would set the house on fire using propane canisters. This was #11, my 11th hour, with unknown what comes next. I would leave a great mystery, with the 13th chapter, ‘Will There be More?’ I was going to place them in the middle of paper and clothes, add kerosene to the pile, use a very short candle to burn down, which would give me time to get out and away. Before leaving and setting the fire stick, I would load the bike in her van, rifle the house for jewelry, money, guns, women’s underclothes, and her ID.

“Once this was all done, and the candle was lit and I left, I would drive to some vacant warehouses, remove the stolen gear and crime items, wipe the van clean and bike up to my truck. I would take ‘Dawn’ [his next communication to police, referring to Chapter 2 of ‘The BTK Story’] to the drop place. The ‘field gram [label]’ meant I was in the field.

“So, I was ready. I drove by the house, all pent up. I saw a crew working on the curb near her house. The unknown. Always an unknown. Too many people around. I went and bought a sandwich and pulled over to watch. I had a timeframe. She would be there for only so long before going

back to work. I waited. The time ran out. The work crew was still there when she left. I was disappointed. I wasn't going to do the hit, but I thought I would try again in the spring, when I had an excuse for fishing. Without trips out of town, it was harder to find good reasons to be away for hits. I went to do the drop at the Omni Center before driving out to join my family at the camp."

DAWN

At the end of the day on October 22, a UPS driver was removing packages from a dropbox outside the Omni Center office building at 200 North Kansas. He discovered a plastic bag containing an envelope that read, "BTK Field Grams." Inside the envelope were eight pieces of photocopied paper. A four-page document featured part of "The BTK Story." Two other pages depicted an "Uno-dos-tres Theory." The seventh page listed the thirteen chapters of "The BTK Story"; chapters 1 and 8 ("A Serial Killer is Born" and "MO-ID-Ruse") were blacked out. The final page was a montage of photocopied photographs of children. The image of each child included hand-drawn gags and ropes.

The "Uno-dos-tres Theory" was a set of triangulated words and phrases. "The BTK World works in threes," it stated, "and is based on the Eternal Triangle." It listed examples of triangulations, such as the Holy Trinity, man-woman-sex, parents and their child, psycho-serial killer-BTK, hit-thrill-kill, and BTK-victim-police.

Chapter 2 of "The BTK Story," entitled "Dawn," contained what appeared to be a detailed account of the serial killer's childhood, adolescence, and early adulthood. He described how "Mother slept beside me at times, the smells, the feel of underclothes, and she let me rub her hair." He said that because she had worked full-time, his grandparents had taken care of him. He said he had a sister, and named her. In one paragraph, he described a humiliating memory, "Masturbations Reflections: 10-11," about his mother discovering seminal stains and beating him. He had fought back. "She held my hands behind my back and used the Man's belt to whip me. Funny it hurt but Sparky liked it. Mother finally quit and said, 'Oh my God What Have I Done.'" As a young man, he said, he had used prostitutes.

He claimed to have been born in 1939. He had been a window-peeper since boyhood, and a thief of female underwear. He had been in the Air Force and had broken into houses while overseas. There, he had collected pictures and made drawings that he had destroyed each time he was transferred. The chronicle included killers he admired: Ted Bundy, Jack the Ripper, Richard Speck, and the Boston Strangler. He likened himself to Jack the Ripper, because he had not been caught.

The author referred to PJ Little Key and PJ Boardwater (written with the expectation that the hit on PJ Boardwater would have been achieved before he mailed the package). Rader describes his thoughts about this communication. “The C/M continues. The theme was to explain the early fictional life of BTK (‘Dawn’) and stir the pot with [pictures of] children. Post-Dawn, I was on the Rader campout at Woodson Lake. My cover story, when I left home was that I had gone to the camp. If you study the north end of my life cycle, it’s all related. At Old Lawrence Road and 45th, west is the overpass and railroad where my fantasies were played out and some fictional stories made up with the railroad detective, ‘Red.’ [After his arrest, Rader told police that he had created the narrative to suggest that BTK’s mother had made him into a killer. “I was trying to portray that Mom kind of made me the way I was.”]

“I used Kansas [Street] again, the same area where I had taped the C/M [package] at 1st and Kansas. It was easy to get off and back on I-135, my quick gateway to home and North Wichita. I used this route a lot.

“If ‘Dawn’ had happened, it would have been a hideous murder to the police and society. The forensic lab may have found burned semen here and there, but it would have been an ‘unknown.’ The police would soon draw the line between BH #8 [Hedge] and BH #10 [Davis], and now BH #11. A triangle, related to 3s. They would focus on that area, and my home was very close to BH #8 (a big reason for me to be down-sizing).”

Explaining the ‘Uno-dos-tres theory,’ Rader says, “I spotted #3 all the time and related to it. The more I study it, more powerful it seem. I used the tri- # for C/M with the Wichita Police Department, starting with the ‘Universe’—‘The Big Bang’ and ‘Galaxies,’ then work down. God set the theme [with] ‘God’—‘Holy Spirit’—‘Son,’ so things do come in 3s. You have to have a third party for it not to pair, the third factor sort of a ‘pot stirrer,’ or [create the conditions of] disorder. For example two friends get along. Then add a third one, so now you have an element of allegiance to

who? But like the ‘Three Musketeer,’ can be very close, or the start of a family, mother-dad-child, etc. It’s that third party that set the pair on a new trail.

“By this time, I had very little in my Hidey Holes. This letter was used, like Jakey, to stir the pot. They knew BTK had killed the Oteros, and maybe would do it again. If I had used a personal computer instead of the one at church, I might still be out there! At this point in time, I was sick in thought; it’s good that the police caught me!”

ADDING DOLLS

Rader attempted to make some calls, but found that the people on the other end of the line—including someone at KAKE-TV—did not take him seriously. He also called Helzberg Jewelers, where Nancy Fox had worked. On December 8, he told a clerk at the QuikTrip that he had placed a bomb at Ninth and Minnesota. The police found no bomb. But a BTK package that they had overlooked was there. Five days later a citizen found it. The December 2004 package contained a doll with its hands bound behind its back, several pieces of paper, and the original driver’s license of Nancy Fox, tied to the doll’s ankle. An index card was labeled, “Dollgram.” A two-page document, “Chapter 9: PJ Foxtail,” described the details of the murder of Nancy Fox and said that SBT meant Sparky Big Time—this incident had greatly aroused him. On “The BTK Story” chapter list, chapters 1, 2, and 8 were crossed out. He also described “PJ Bell,” a failed project.

“South of 37th Street North, on Hydraulic, was a self-service gas station with a payphone. I checked for a video camera and called from my car, with gloves on. I was nervous on these calls. I used a Hispanic tone and handkerchief. Unknown to me, I dropped a twenty-dollar bill. It was folded up nice and neat. Later, as I checked my billfold, it was missing! I had to return in the daytime, not sure what vehicle I had driven, and luckily, it was still there. It would have had my fingerprints on it! I was hoping the police were not watching this phone. I did make the call to a non-police area for no fast tracing.

“I set the double-wrapped package by a tree, southside, facing away from the corner. If you recall, PJ Oldmanor started off on Ninth and Old Manor. This was actually the main start of the BTK regime. There is also

reflected a 3 in 9. It was easy to get off and onto I-135 there. During my ADT days, I sometimes parked and ate lunch in this park. I also used Ninth to troll the area for #5. At one time, I threw the Oteros' key ring on Ninth, east of this park.

"I chose this QuikTrip for its address: 3216, and a good distance from me for police related matters. As a business, they ran a very tight ship. I knew they wouldn't drop the ball. I used them for photocopies.

"The date was the Foxtail hit. I was trying to relate to anniversaries. The first letter was BH #7 [Vian]. The 'Dawn' package was October 21. (I forgot this was also [the anniversary of] when I sent the first letter about the Oteros.)

"I bought Barbie-type dolls for C/M at Wal-Mart and Dollar General, wearing sunglasses and a hat. I paid in cash. Other times I used them in motel parties. I tied them up and took pictures of them hanging. I would simulate large dolls as female figures on the motel bed, in S/M rituals and bondage. I took pictures and practiced hits. On the dolls, I used the same colors of material or colored tape I had used on the hits, to represent the crime scenes. When I cut one doll's hair, I had strands all over, hard to clean up. I worried about that. I also bought 'Halloween' feminine apparel, wigs, masks, black gloves—'cat woman' type stuff. The Bombgram with the doll was to come with the Vian drop.

"Another reason I used [Murdock] Park was the black neighborhood, so it might be handled first by someone making an error. It was. The person picked up and called KAKE, not police. I'll bet they didn't handle it with gloves! Then a card [taken from the package] showed up later, so my plan worked.

"I included the ID for Nancy Fox, because I wanted the police to know it was a 'red' BTK hit. I was also doing cleanup of files.

"The PJ codes related to key items: female lived alone, could use a ruse, met my 'off' time frame or prowler time schedule, area I knew, place to park my vehicle, area close enough to drop victim's vehicle and walk to mine, corner house or alone or covered porch, [close to] escape routes, and a commercial area nearby.

"I put some fiction into the story to the police, a lot like a cheap sex novel or X-rated movie. Using 'Sparky' for sex was like a spark that starts a fire. It is related to sadistic feelings. 'S' is for super control over life and

death. It is also the sign for a snake or viper, and it [stands for] satisfaction, which is gratification.

“Why I included PJ Boardwater in this package, I don’t know.

“When I see this now, I’m actually embarrassed at times at what I wrote for the police. But this is part of the cube world.”

Around the same time, *America’s Most Wanted* aired a segment on BTK and asked for the public’s assistance. Although they made several untrue statements, the fact that this popular national show had covered the BTK series of murders pleased Rader. He watched the episode, feeling excited over being in the spotlight. “It gave me a boost. It livened the hunt.”

NOW WE SEE HIM

On January 25, 2005, police learned that KAKE-TV had received another BTK communication. It was a postcard with the following return address: S. Killett, 803 N. Edgemoor, Wichita, KS 67208. This had been the Otero address. The postcard described a Post Toasties cereal box that had been left between 69th and 77th North on Seneca Street. The sender wanted someone to figure out a way to let him know that the box had been located. He also wanted to know if the police had received “Communication #7,” dropped at a Home Depot on January 8. Police found the cereal box, filmed by the KAKE crew. The box contained another doll, apparently representing Josephine Otero. A rope, wrapped around the doll’s neck, was attached to a PVC pipe. “Chapter 9-Hits: PJ-Little Mex 01-15-74” was a two-page document, apparently part of “The BTK Story” devoted to the Otero murders. It read, in part, “An Organized serial killer did the Murders; it is the true sadistic Sexual Killer profile that happen here.” On the chapter list, chapters 1, 2, and 8 were blacked out. Another two-page document described “BTK’s Haunts.” There was also some jewelry.

Detectives went to the eastside Home Depot to ask about a package. An employee admitted that he had found a Special K cereal box in the bed of his pickup truck. Inside was a blue beaded necklace and some pages of writing. He had thrown the box away, but found it still sitting in the trash and gave it to the police. Detectives reviewed the Home Depot security tapes from January 8. They saw a dark SUV pull up to the truck. A man exited the SUV and walked around it.

Investigators were excited. This was their first image of the killer, although it was too blurry to make an identification.

The papers in the box included a two-page piece of writing called “Boom”; the BTK chapter list, with 1, 2, and 8 blacked out; and a document entitled “Communication.” Here the author describes the “BTK Lair,” a three-story house with a “kill room,” an elevator, and a DTPG bondage room. There was also a list of BTK’s “Projects.” The author asks if he can communicate safely with a floppy disk. He urges the police to “be honest” and tells them to respond with an ad in a specific part of the newspaper. They should write, “Rex, it will be OK,” so he will know if he can proceed. Once he sees the response, he will send a test floppy.

Rader trusted the police to tell him the truth. He had already questioned an officer, Randy Stone, about the security of e-mail and learned that it can be traced. He thought that floppies were another matter, however. Landwehr was cautiously excited. His strategy was working. BTK was talking with investigators as if they were playing some game together. They would have no qualms about placing the ad.

Rader had spent some time designing the new BTK lair, more sophisticated than his previous fantasy. It was modeled after a specific house in Wichita, with updated technology.

“The Lair [was] like the Holmes Castle. [It had a] bomb made of propane tank and gasoline, sparked by alarm system, in the event of BTK not being there. A signal [would be] sent to his cellular phone. If a second alarm of intrusion was taking place, the system could go, or be shut down by cellular or hidden switches. [The] bomb also could be set off by cellular calls or manual switches. [The] lair [was] modeled off [the] Kootze house on North Broadway, ‘Kootze Flower,’ or [a] home in east part of Wichita, a 3–4-story home along Beaumont Street, I believe, off Douglas. Kootze was a good friend of mine. At one time, I installed an alarm in his house. The drawing is close, but the one to police in the Home Depot drop was very detailed and drawn on a computer, and [the] wording [was] done by computer. The railroad machine would have been like a victim on a R/R track (a *Dudley Do-Right* machine). The pretend Reid Road engine machine would go down the short track to the person. DTPG = Death to Pretty Girls. It’s a room of torture devices similar to the dungeon. Peek-holes and hidden cameras through[out] the house (like Holmes) to spy on people and watch victims. Upon Go system for bomb, all [of the] doors [would] become

unlocked, including [the door to the] safe, so the first explosion would blow up or burn everything. The master bedroom would have a secret door.

“I had recently learned how to cut and paste boxes on the computer. Using a large box as the BTK Lair, I drew a model home unit with different rooms. It was like my fantasy silo home, and H. H. Holmes’ White Castle of Chicago. I liked the feature of blowing it up if someone came in. I understand that the police tried to find big homes with elevators in them, like the search for the ‘train buff’ with Jakey.

“The DTPG room has been with me since 4th or 5th grade, for cute or popular girls. It involves wooden beams, like a barn, ropes, chains, metal, all the things you would find in a barn. In my early teens, I designed cat boxes for trapping cats, then hung them. My grandparents wouldn’t miss one or two. Later, during fishing trips to the pond, I would get rid of them while digging for bait.

“I used ‘Rex’ because it rhymed with Sex, and from ‘red,’ the color of danger and blood. Rex or Red, the railroad detective who befriended me in my childhood days, and a main mentor.

“I used a false name on the postcard, S. Killett. Note the 3 in the address. ‘Edge’ used due to knife edge, and ‘moor,’ which can be related to ‘make fast’ or ‘fix in place,’ ‘secure,’ which happened to the Otero family. So, we have BTK on a knife edge and securing the family. Or, you could also try BTK on ‘abyss edge,’ falling in to a canyon of darkness.

“I was daring to do a drop closer to home, on North Seneca, for I grew up at 4815. I seemed to be pushing for more media and C/M rush, sort of a Dark Drug High! I had fun with the ‘Boom.’ This was a new element of BTK, like Dawn and Jakey, to stir the pot and let police know that BTK is complicated.

“I was trying to communicate with drops close to BTK anniversaries. Cereal boxes was a joke for ‘serial killer.’ When I was buying one at the Food For Less at the corner of Hillside and Douglas, I almost ran into church members that I knew. I bought it with a few other items, paid cash, wore a hat and sunglasses for video. It seems like I removed the bar code, handling it with gloves. If they found any fingerprints, not mine, for sure. The paperwork that went into it was done in my office at Park City City Hall. The construction and final prep were done at home.

“Post Toasties was for ‘T,’ Special K was for ‘K,’ and the next one would have been a bomb in a Raisin Bran box for ‘B,’ as a code. This was

to be done on Hydraulic Street, planned for March 17, with the Vian doll. I was going to put it north of Central on a railroad track area, on a bridge that crosses the drainage canal. I had the spot picked out and had purchased supplies.

“I had used the mailbox for #2 at this location. I had also bought the plastic bags back in 1979, for storage of BH #6’s [Vian] clothes.

“I used a brick from the house to weight it down. I leaned it against a curved warning sign that looks symbolic of a female body.

“I had originally planned to leave this drop in a new park off Hillside, where the old Drive-in Terrace Theater was located. I had placed it on the right side of the road, then messed my footprints up, but realized I had left tire track marks in the snow. I had marked the box with bright color material, easily spotted, then drove away. Then I came back and picked it up. So, the Home Depot was not a well-planned drop. I believe I had a time element to get back home. The drop was made under pressure. I picked a pick-up truck with an open bed. I believed the camera on the store was too far to pick me out. Or I didn’t think they had them, or I forgot. (When the police said they had me on tape, I thought they were bluffing.)

“I was working down the Chapter 9 hits. I really think PJ Little Mex was more of a media rush, like Jakey. Earlier, it was PJ Mex, PJ OT, PJ Wetback, and PJ 4, to name a few, meaning no disrespect to the Hispanic. Some PJs were named after the fact. Much like men name boats, cars, and oil rigs. A named object is easy to identify with. (Even today, it brings back clear memories, a tag line, not forgotten.)

“Jewelry from my PJ places I had kept over the years in my Hidey Holes. If the police had an evidence stolen list, they could ID it with a past PJ. That was the idea [I] tried to leave for the BTK trademark.

“Although I said in the story that I spotted Josephine, I had actually spotted Mrs. Otero, the girl and boy going to school. I followed them, and followed Mrs. Otero home. I checked her routine a few times. I had thought I would kidnap them in the garage, but then I changed my mind, due to the boy letting the dog out.

“I had met KAKE anchor Susan Peters, a pretty dark-haired woman who fit my type, eye to eye at Christ Lutheran Church. The choir director worked at KAKE in the weather department. He let the church choir members tour KAKE in 2004. At this time I met her and did mental research

to use KAKE-TV for drop sites, and a drop was even planned on their front door.

“I used Brian’s vehicle in the latter days of cat-and-mouse, and the Home Depot tape linked it. (I later saw the film footage. You couldn’t really see who it was, only a dark color SUV and a man. I was nervous. I did it quickly and left.) Due to the length of time that I had covered up my Dark Side to my wife, kids, friends, relatives and society, for all purposes and plans, I had never planned on being caught. ‘What if’ never really came to light very often. Brian was in the Navy, so his car was parked at our place. If the police knew of me or were tracking me, they wouldn’t have that vehicle registered to me. I also used fake or stolen plates on it at times. If they drove by my house, they may have noticed the vehicle, but maybe it was just someone visiting me. They couldn’t tell. We were trying to sell our Ford Tempo, so I had to have another vehicle to use, besides my Ford 150 and our Pontiac. Brian had asked us to drive it to keep the motor in shape while he was away. So, it was a perfect car for prowling or dropping off a BTK package. If I’d had to abandon it, to the police it was stolen.

“The day I used it for PJ Boardwater was the planning stage only. That’s all, not a hit. I just quickly drove into her driveway and knocked on the front door to check if anyone was in the house in the morning, before noon. I had planned on a before-lunch hit, which would come in October, the weekend before Halloween.

“So, really, once I crossed into the Dark Side, I knew it would hurt and destroy my personal and family life, but you are aware of the main six psychopathic traits:

- 1.Narcissism [strong]
- 2.Impulsivity (very weak for me)
- 3.Lack of conscience (cube back and forth)
- 4.Manipulativeness (strong)
- 5.Pathological lying (fake ruses and cover stories, covering my tracks)
- 6.Cold-heartedness—on hits, plans, fantasies

Most of these were controlled, which is part of my style that is different from other serial killers, I believe, or ‘mad dogs’ like Speck or Henry Lee Lucas. When the Oteros saw my face, I had crossed the deadly path.”

Rader watched the newspapers for a response to his instructions and prepared more communications as other anniversaries drew near.

14 STORY, INTERRUPTED

I thought I would pull it off, retire, and have mementos.
Dennis Rader

Lieutenant Landwehr's new BTK taskforce could not know whether the author of these missives was telling the whole truth, a partial truth, or all lies. But even partial truths meant potential leads, and all leads had to be checked. It was apparent that BTK was familiar with law enforcement and evidence processing. Clearly, he lived locally and drove a dark SUV, possibly a Jeep Grand Cherokee. A Virginia-based company, EagleForce Associates, had weighted the evidence for significance. The analysts then cross-correlated the data, showing that BTK was likely a white male around sixty, with military experience and a connection to Wichita State University. This did not help much.

In response to BTK's instructions, investigators ran an ad in the *Wichita Eagle* to assure him that they could not trace him with a computer diskette. This was a trap, and they hoped he would take the bait. On February 3, 2005, KAKE-TV received a postcard with this return address: Happ Kakeman, 1500 N. West Street. The note's author thanked the news team for their effort and the police for their quick response. He promised a test run soon. Rader was giddy. What a relief to stop photocopying over and over. "The paperwork was done at the Park City office, copied at different spots, and mailed away from Park City. I never used the same mailbox drop. It was an effort."

He was used to computers now. They made things so easy. His own computer and printer at home were not working properly but, as the recently elected president of the church congregation, "I had access to the church's computer for typing up meeting notes." With it, he prepared a disk with a "test" file in rich text format. The document directed police to read a 3x5 card included in the package for details on how to continue to communicate with him.

The package was received on February 16 at a different television station, the Fox-affiliated KSAS-TV. The return address was P. J. Fox, 316 N.

West Street. The envelope contained three index cards, a locket on a gold chain, and the purple “test” disk. One card featured an image of the cover of a 1989 John Sanford novel, *Rules of Prey*.

This novel clearly spoke to Rader, with its “maddog” serial killer of pretty young women. In the book, the killer lives by a specific set of rules:

- Never kill anyone you know.
- Never have a motive.
- Never follow a discoverable pattern.
- Never carry a weapon after it has been used.
- Isolate yourself from random discovery.
- Beware of leaving physical evidence.

Sanford’s maddog reviewed other investigations to learn from them. He was a role player and a chess player. He viewed himself as exceedingly careful, although he nevertheless made mistakes.

A second index card labeled “Communication-11” listed some of BTK’s communications with the police, from the seventh to the eleventh. The third card gave instructions about the disk. All future communications, BTK wrote, would be assigned a number. He instructed officers to place another ad.

Despite Rader’s studies in administration of justice, where he would have learned that police can and do lie to attain their goals, he trusted Landwehr. “I did trust him. How dumb of me to think they wouldn’t trick me,” he confided later. “I guess my assurance that I had everything under control overweighed my common sense.

“I dropped this package at a Belaire or a Quick Trip mailbox on my normal daily run to the Wichita Animal Shelter. Like the drop at Home Depot, I was ‘yes, no, yes, no’ as my hand with the package approached the mail slot. I wasn’t sure. Then it was over! I let it go. Somewhere in the back of my mind, I sensed, ‘It may not work and what if!’ I used PJ Foxtail, due to that TV channel [KSAS] using Fox as its tag name. It was a symbolic relationship, with BTK elements.

“The gold chain and locket I probably stole from Nancy Fox. I didn’t catalogue the items I took like I should have. That was an oversight. So I wasn’t sure.

“I bought the package of diskettes from Wal-Mart West, off 21st Street North. I paid in cash. I used purple to mean imperial power, symbolic of BTK.

“I believe I had the Sanford book cover in my Hidey Hole. I used it as symbolic of BTK’s MO. That Minotaur used potatoes in a sock to club his female victims. That was going to be my MO for BH #11 [Boardwater]. I believe that killer used women’s new Kotex for gags, with duct tape. At one time in my hit kit, I did have some. They can be used for first aid as well, to stop bleeding. I, like other Minotaurs, read and learn from crime thrillers, or watched TV and movies. Also, many things I learned at WSU in AJ classes.

“I partly knew not to use your own computer, for computer ID. Thus, I couldn’t use our home computer or my work computer. What I didn’t know was that any computer stores information onto the diskette in the properties section (I assume).

“To start the diskette, I downloaded some church info from a member at the Park City Library. I may have signed on with my first name. I used their pay-per-service computer. I worked on church matters as a cover story at the church, erased that info, and set the ‘This is a Test’ program up. That was done on a Saturday. I had church members stop by and visit me in the church secretary’s office (where the computer was set up for the church). [When they came in], I had to quickly shut down the computer screen. I also used this non-virgin diskette and the church computer to program them. I thought it was safe to use.

“I had very big plans for my communications with police, sharing PJ hit pics, slick ads, 3x5 cards, and other related matters. I was emptying my Hidey Holes of evidence. I had mastered the work of JPEG pics to the computer, etc., [making] digital pics. I had started to work to download my slick ads, not to be shared with anyone. Bottom line, I thought if a diskette was used indirectly, like I copied the other church members’ info off onto it, it was now used, and safe to use without IDing itself. Furthermore, it could be used to set up other diskettes. But that diskette left a trail to the Park City Library as well. I think my password IDed me as Dennis. I was the recent new president that year, elected by the congregation.”

BTK REVEALED

The police department’s computer expert got to work on the disk. In the “properties” area, they found a name, “Dennis.” By restoring data that had been over-written, they were able to trace the disk to a computer at Christ

Lutheran Church. They learned from a Google search that the president of the congregation was named Dennis Rader, and obtained his address. They *had* him.

Officers went to the church, where the pastor admitted that Dennis Rader had used the computer. Digital footprints found on the hard drive showed BTK's recent messages. And there was more: Rader had graduated from Wichita State University, had a military background, and currently worked as a compliance officer. A black Jeep Grand Cherokee was parked in his driveway. It all fit.

Landwehr had already authorized the DNA analysis of the crime scene samples. A DNA sample subpoenaed from Rader's daughter's medical files clinched the identification. The father of Kerri Rader had been statistically matched to semen left at the Otero house and at Nancy Fox's apartment, and to the fingernail scrapings from Vicki Wegerle. Dennis Rader, church leader and family man, was BTK.

Oblivious to these developments, Rader was preparing a Shirley Vian doll and another communication. Landwehr directed the task force to put Rader under surveillance until they had everything they needed for an arrest. Search warrants for Rader's home, office, and church were prepared.

On February 25, investigators awaited the designated lunch hour. Rader's routines had been observed and determined. He came home every day for lunch, at a precise time. "Once a student of others' routine, I became a victim myself. Somewhere in the back of my mind, I did think about changing routes that day. Maybe if I had, I would have at least seen my wife one more time, perhaps said good-bye. Earlier that morning, I had dropped by to give her my Park City paycheck for deposit. I got coffee and a sweet roll, my Friday ritual. We kissed and said, 'I'll see you at lunch time.' That was the last time I ever saw her."

At 12:15 p.m., two detectives pulled Rader over; the rest of the team swarmed in to subdue and cuff him.

"A whole fleet of unmarked and marked police cars were parked on West Parkview, facing where I turned off for lunch. It was too late for me to react—trapped! When they approached me, I thought I must have run a stop sign."

They forced him to the ground. He gave no resistance, only asking that someone tell his wife. Upon being placed into a police car next to Detective

Landwehr, Rader greeted him as if they were friends. "I did what Son of Sam did, said 'Hello Mr. Landwehr.'"

He would later say that if he'd had time to act, he would have shot his way out and escaped, like a movie superhero.

During the interrogation at the Epic Center, Rader danced around the facts. "I knew it was over, but I played cat-and-mouse as long as I could [three hours]. I worried about Paula and the kids. I can only imagine what they went through after my arrest. It could not have been good. I broke their hearts. The 'what if' hit hard."

Investigators told him they could match his DNA to the crimes and that they had him dead to rights with the computer disk. This news seemed to finish him. After trying to find a loophole, Rader admitted he was BTK. Even after hours of providing details, however, he still hinted that he might be a wannabe who had not actually committed any of the murders, just a fan who had read a lot about BTK. The police assured him that they were confident that the DNA evidence would nail him.

"I don't know why they didn't take a DNA sample from Brian. It could be that he turned them down. I'm not sure how they got Kerri's sample. She had been sick at times and visited the college clinic, so maybe they went there. Once they matched her DNA with Otero, Fox and Wegerle, they had me. Three cases. 1-2-3. They were matched after Wegerle became a hot case again. But I thought they might be bluffing. After all those years, they still had that stuff? Once BH #9 [Wegerle] opened up, all of the BTK cases were open again for the Task Force review. They didn't know BH #9 [Wegerle] was BTK until I let them know. Just an 'unknown male individual.' In all this, I wondered where I had made the mistake. I just couldn't believe it was something simple! They knew more about computers than I did. Lucky for them, unlucky for me!"

After his arrest, Rader met the digital analyst who had helped to identify him. It was Randy Stone, the same officer who had given him advice a few months earlier about e-mail security.

The police talked to Rader for about thirty hours over the course of two days. After learning that BTK had used copiers at Wichita State University in 1978, investigators had surmised that the author of "Oh! Death to Nancy" might have attended a class taught by P. J. Wyatt, who had included the folk song, "Oh Death," in her curriculum. This possible connection had resurfaced in 2004 when Landwehr appealed to the public

for information. During the interrogation, Rader said he had never met Wyatt, and that the letters "PJ" in his word puzzle referred to projects. Considering his poor grammar, Rader was amused by their efforts to link him to an English professor. He added that the "Jakey" and Fager descriptions were just "blowing smoke," based on newspaper accounts. The Fager homicides had excited him, because "if the girls were bound with black plastic tape and drowned, that's pretty sexual in my category. If they were nude, that's even more so . . . That's the kind of stuff I would do or would like to collect."

Rader admitted to his interrogators that he was a "really weird guy who has these dreams." A few times he said he was "sick." He also said, "Normally, I'm a pretty nice guy. I'm sorry, but I am."

When asked if he had ever confided in someone else, about any of his crimes, he said, "Oh no. Not a soul . . . Been extremely hard, mentally. It's kind of like a spy thing."

Rader described the details of his next planned communication, a "bombgram." "The Shirley doll was going to be in the box. She was going to be naturally nude, and she was going to have assimilated bindings on her with a white plastic bag over her head and a pink something on her head." He had hoped to present a dilemma: should the bomb squad blow it up for safety, or try to preserve it for evidence, despite the risk that it was a real bomb? "I was going to wire this sucker with the four wires and I was going to run it over to a cardboard box. . . . And there would be odes to Vian, to Shirley. I just found a poem and redid it the way I liked it. It was going to be a synopsis of what happened."

Rader added that he "was going to make a humor page. Probably in the closing chapters there was going to be a funny page. Copyright BTK, with little drawings and stuff. All editorials. I was going to do a play production, a final curtain call. I would have a cast of characters, and down at the bottom, BTK Productions."

During this time, the DNA match was confirmed.

"I really did talk too much, but once I was caught I knew I probably wouldn't go to trial. I'd get it off my chest. We talked late that day and they brought in a mattress and chained me up like a Thanksgiving turkey. Next day, all day, were interviews. [Different teams took turns, depending on which investigation was addressed.] On Saturday evening, they booked me into an isolated cell in Sedgwick County [Jail]. Either Saturday night or

Sunday, [defense attorney] Richard Ney came to see me in one of their private rooms. He told me to keep quiet, no more police talk. When they showed up for more interviews, I told them I had my attorney.”

Landwehr, with FBI Special Agent Bob Morton, had persuaded Rader to give up his “Hidey Holes.” In exchange for the assurance that officers would not tear apart his home and office, he agreed to draw maps showing them where they could find the evidence he still had left. “If I had known that Paula wouldn’t go back to the house, I might have been quiet about the Hidey Holes. They didn’t find them all. They overlooked the false wall I had in the attached shed, and I don’t think they went under the house or messed with the attic. As I look over the evidence logs, there are things missing. But they had enough to put the puzzle together.”

After a long day and sleepless night, Rader’s mug shot was taken. “I looked like a real-time con-monster, due to lack of sleep in their overnight holding cell. I had no ability to wash or comb my hair. Not one of my better pics!”

The search produced photos of some of the victims, as well as photos of Rader himself in bondage. (He explained to them that he would “rather have had someone else in there,” but his sexual needs demanded that *someone* be bound and dressing in female clothing, and binding himself facilitated the fantasy.) Police also recovered newspaper clippings about the incidents and copies of all his communications, along with five detailed journals, but his gruesome drawings of torture turned their stomachs. Detectives were alarmed to see the number of victims that Rader had stalked over the years, many of whom could easily have ended up dead.

The police had enough evidence to charge Rader with eight murders, but BTK had other news for them: he confessed to ten—and said he had nearly killed an eleventh person.

Rader remained in the Sedgwick County Jail for his various hearings.

THE MOTHER LODE

The search warrant on Rader’s office in Park City—what he called his “Mother Lode”—allowed police access to his computer and a locked metal filing cabinet. In all, they collected seven three-ring binders and twenty-five hanging files, containing writings, drawings, 3x5 cards, books, floppy disks,

and envelopes. Tucked beneath the desk drawer was a large manila envelope that contained dozens of drawings of women bound to torture devices. One of the binders contained clippings of the BTK homicides. A “Master Book” had more clippings, as well as the “Wanted” poster from the Otero murders. The computer disks contained the chapters of “The BTK Story” that had been doled out to the police as Rader had written them. Some of these chapters also had been printed out.

Most incriminating were Rader’s “hot” items: the original materials used in the BTK communications, including a timeline and description of Rader’s cat-and-mouse game. These included the page with photos of Vicki Wegerle and her driver’s license, the word puzzle that Rader had devised, the original poems and drawings sent to police, the Jakey story, Polaroid photos of Rader engaged in self-bondage, copy-reduced versions of the communications applied to 3x5 cards, the inquiry from Rader about computer disks being traceable, and a copy of the ad reassuring him that he could proceed. Another binder included a small gold ring with clippings about the Marine Hedge homicide and a dozen Polaroid photos of her body being posed, as well as items related to Vicki Wegerle, Dolores Davis, and Anna Williams. Rader also stored lingerie from his “projects” in these collections, along with bondage devices. Other evidence included a detailed, hand-drawn map, in four colors, showing the paths Rader used before and after the murders, as well as the original of the letter and drawing sent to Mary Fager.

One collection of celebrity photos cut from magazines showed them with gags and bindings. There also were hundreds of photos from other publications (mostly detective magazines) of women being bound and attacked, along with hundreds of 3x5 cards bearing such photos (attached with tape). A hanging folder contained the Southwest Bell Telephone sticker that Rader had used in his ruse with Vicki Wegerle. The evidence logs run on for pages and pages.

ASSESSMENT

Rader’s first court appearance was on March 1, 2005. Richard Ney, who had won an acquittal for Bill Butterworth in the Fager triple homicide, temporarily represented him. “My family had hired him. He met me on

February 26 in the evening. I told him I was BTK, and to tell my family I was sorry. I had tried to call them but couldn't get out. Due to the Butterworth case and the BTK letter I wrote to Mary Fager, he couldn't represent me."

Steve Osburn and Sarah McKinnon were appointed as public defenders, leading a team of attorneys and investigators. They hired Dr. Robert Mendoza and Tali K. Waters, of Cambridge Forensic Consultants, to perform a psychological assessment for competency. Mendoza put Rader through some standard assessment instruments, but competency focuses only on present mental ability to participate in various parts of the legal process. It is not about mental state at the time of the offence. Thus the assessment was not a comprehensive mental health examination, although it did go beyond what was required for a competency evaluation.

Mendoza noted that there was no history of mental illness or drug abuse, and no medical conditions. He examined the journals and drawings that Rader had made and the crime scene photos. He also watched the videotape of Rader's police interrogation, and examined medical, school, and prison records. During the evaluation, Rader was depressed, even tearful. His level of attention had declined, he had lost weight, and he was anxious. He said he had considered suffocating himself in his cell, but despite his circumstances he wanted to live. Mendoza thought that Rader's habit of excessive writing—he kept daily logs—might be a condition known as hypergraphia. Rader also provided "excessive detail" in conversation.

On the back of Rader's copy of this report, someone wrote, "manipulation as a symptom of psychopathic personality disorder." It is unknown who wrote this, but it seems to have been a member of the evaluation team, as there is a note to "Steve" (the attorney) that no pedophilia is present. Despite this annotation, there is no evidence that anyone on the evaluation team used a standard diagnostic instrument for determining psychopathy. Mental health practitioners in the United States rarely use the Psychopathy Checklist–Revised unless they have been specifically trained on it. They typically rely on diagnostic categories in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, which was in its fourth edition at the time (*DSM-IV-TR*).

Along with hypergraphia, the report identified narcissistic personality disorder (NPD) and obsessive-compulsive personality disorder (OCD). In

Rader's case, neither disorder rose to the level of a major mental illness. Nor were they highly relevant for a competency evaluation.

The *DSM-IV-TR* included NPD in Cluster B on Axis II, with three other disorders that manifest in egocentric behavior. While not all people with NPD are criminals, NPD and its close cousin, psychopathy, are the disorders most commonly found among predatory sex offenders and lust killers. OCD is an intense preoccupation with rituals and routines. Such people are pressured by fears that result in repetitive behaviors meant to reassure them. (Rader agrees that he is narcissistic but thinks his routines are ordinary, not obsessive or fear-based. He denies he is hypergraphic.)

During the evaluation, Rader demonstrated a lack of empathy for his victims, as well as a sense of grandiosity. He showed a strong need for admiration and attention, and was preoccupied with fantasies of power. He thought only people with a high status could understand him, because he considered himself unique. He showed a strong sense of entitlement in his comments, especially to special attention and treatment. His life history showed exploitation of others for his advantage, to gratify his own needs. He was preoccupied with maintaining routine and structure, which gave him a sense of control. He demonstrated an attunement to patterns and was preoccupied with lists, rules, and order. Mendoza found him to be rigid and stubborn, as well as conscientious to a fault.

"Dr. 'M' had ink blobs and other tests," said Rader, "but I recall looking at them, and telling him my feelings. I would say, a 'butterfly' or some related figure, but then I [would] say it could be a 'monster' and give a description. I have always had a knack of finding monster figures in every-day forms. Here in my room, I call them Cave Monsters. They're either on the wall or floor. I could spend all day sketching them, each time a new angle or light shades."

To Mendoza, Rader described his decision-making methods as primarily planned and logical, but admitted that, from 10 to 25 percent of the time, "I do make impulsive decisions when I don't have time to think about it." There was evidence of some paranoia, but not of delusions. Rader was found competent to stand trial. There was little doubt that he was perfectly capable, but the attorneys were covering all bases.

On April 19, wearing a bulletproof vest, Rader formally waived his preliminary hearing. In early May, he appeared again before the judge to

choose from among pleas of guilt, innocence, no contest, or silence. Rader said nothing. His trial was set for June 27.

LEGAL PROCEEDINGS

District Attorney Nola Tedesco Foulston and her team prepared for a trial. Elected DA of Sedgwick County in 1989, Foulston had won many awards and accolades for her assertive style. She had gotten the death penalty for the two Carr brothers (for their horrific murder spree in the winter of 2000), and successfully prosecuted Leroy Hendricks under the Sexually Violent Predator Act. Known as a tough-on-crime prosecutor, she left no stone unturned. Rader could not face the death penalty, since it had not been in effect in Kansas until 1994, but Foulston would want the community to feel the full horror of his treatment of the victims and be as outraged as she was. She had been satisfied with his capture, had watched him confessing, and was now prepared for legal action.

Pastor Michael Clark, from Christ Lutheran, was a regular visitor at the jail. He was assisting author Stephen Singular on *The Unholy Messenger*, a book about Rader from Clark's perspective. In the beginning, he was certain the police had made a mistake. When he finally came to terms with Rader's confession, he said he still felt an obligation—as Rader's pastor—to minister to him. Clark wondered about demonic possession, looked into the ritual of exorcism, and mentioned this possibility to Rader.

Although Rader sometimes accepted the notion that he was possessed, he now says, "Pastor Clark visited me and seemed to be gathering information to help the author. I felt that he used me and betrayed me, and that he needed attention in the media. I know he did an interview for *Reader's Digest* shortly after my arrest. I do believe it was a shock to him. Perhaps he felt there were demons around us, so this was the reason for the exorcist. Or perhaps he felt that after dealing with me, he needed to be cleansed of me. I became untrusting of him, especially when the book came out. I think he might have sensed that, or decided to retire soon afterward, as though he was part of the theme of my dark days. He did write me a letter upon the death of my mother [in 2007], and visited her in her last

days. I get the feeling, from his businesslike behavior at church [before my arrest] that he was troubled by something. He wasn't a warm person."

On the morning of the first day of trial, June 27, Rader passed through a media circus and entered the packed courtroom, dressed in a beige blazer and dark tie. The victims' family members were present. Outside it was nearly 100 degrees. Court TV cameras were angled from different sides. Some trial-watchers expected to hear motions for a delay, but Rader soon ended the suspense. When Judge Gregory Waller asked for his plea, he admitted in a flat voice that he was guilty. There would be no trial. With the exception of those who were most emotionally affected by Rader's acts, the disappointment was palpable.

But Rader's day in court was not over.

Judge Waller read through the ten murder counts. After each, he asked Rader to admit to guilt. He did so. Then with probing questions, Waller took Rader through the full details of each incident. Although Rader was initially caught off-guard, he fell into his part. He told his story in his own way, with polite references to the judge as "sir." He even instructed Waller—and all who watched—in the ways of a serial killer. In a monotone, he went meticulously over the details of his "projects," describing them as if each murder was just business. He said he had killed to satisfy his sexual fantasies. Many thought he displayed no emotion, but Pastor Clark said he could see that Rader was just barely staying in control.

Afterward, Rader agreed to an interview with Larry Hatteberg of KAKE-TV. "I basically just shot from the hip," Rader told me, saying that he had been unprepared. He faulted Factor X for the compulsion to kill and admitted that he could easily switch between being warm and cold. Factor X was a "deep subject." A phone conversation was not the right way to get into it. He mentioned the possibility of demons. In fact, he had said to a friend, "I have to tell all to rid me of all the evil forces. He is still here. I can feel him. Not as strong, but he is here."

The word "demon" derives from *daimon* in ancient Greek and refers to liminal beings that were more than human but less than divine. In some cultures, mental disorders such as schizophrenia and dissociative identity disorder have been blamed on spirit possession. Altered states of consciousness can cause perceptual changes, some of which can seem like pressure from an external entity. In Christian beliefs, demons are the minions of Satan. They are pure evil.

Pastor Clark had stated his belief, to those who would listen, that Rader was possessed. He said as much to Rader during their visits (and Rader has repeated this idea to me).

I know of other serial killers who thought they were controlled by something like Rader's Factor X. "Coed Killer" Ed Kemper described his "little zapples." William Suff said a series of yellow light bolts preceded his murders.

Ted Bundy described a malignant being—an "entity"—that emerged from him whenever he was tense or drunk. It was, he stated, a disordered part of himself. "And as the condition develops and its purposes or its characteristics become more well defined, it begins to demand more time of the individual [referring to himself] . . . There's a certain amount of tension, uh, struggle, between the normal personality and this, this, uh, psychopathological, uh, entity . . . This condition inside him seems to be competing for more attention." Finally, Bundy said, the entity would break through. "The tension would be too great and the demands and expectations of this entity would reach a point where they just could not be controlled."

This sounds like Rader's "monster" in the brain. "The pressure is great," he wrote, "and somt-times he run the game to his liking." It seems possible that, during intense arousal, a neurological experience could occur that feels like an outside force, like possession.

During the sentencing phase, from August 17 to August 19, DA Foulston showed a detailed PowerPoint that included a number of photos from Rader's mother lode, including himself in various states of hanging and bondage. "It was very embarrassing," he said. "I just stared ahead and kept my head up."

Just as Rader rose to make his statement, the victims' families left the courtroom. He would get no audience with them. Still, he made a long statement, describing how many things he had in common with his victims. To those who stayed, it was clear that he did not seem to understand the enormity of what he had done or its impact on the families and the community, including his own family. He found the way that his family had been handled offensive, as if it weighed more in the moral scheme of things than his murders. Oddly, he thanked members of law enforcement. He received ten consecutive life sentences, to be served at the El Dorado Correctional Facility for a minimum of 175 years before any possibility of parole. His wife divorced him and the house went up for auction.

EL DORADO

At Sedgwick County Jail, Rader had been the “Podfather” to other prisoners there. He enjoyed the joke. With numerous requests for interviews, he’d reveled in his notoriety. Things were different when he went into segregation at El Dorado Correctional Facility (EDCF) in August 2005.

Established in 1991, the EDCF houses the Kansas Department of Corrections Reception and Diagnostic Unit (RDU) and the state’s largest long-term segregation unit. Inmates in segregation are locked in their eighty-square-foot cells for twenty-three hours each day, with an hour most days for exercise. They have a bunk, toilet, sink, metal table and chair, and some shelving. Although initially denied television, radio, and newspapers at DA Foulston’s urging, Rader quickly earned these privileges. He knew how to be a model prisoner.

He keeps track of the weather, stock market, and local farm reports. “Keeping busy,” he says, “is the key.” He has a view of the sky through a small window, so he checks the stars morning and night. He also has an exercise log. “Exercise, like a lot of my world, I keep tab.” In one letter he mentions that he is “so far behind” in what he wants to accomplish. Although he sleeps poorly at night, he takes “deep,” post-dinner “power naps.”

People who visit see him only via video screen, where he sits in a small room completely separate from them. He records detailed schedules of his day-to-day activities, from the time he rises around 5:00 a.m. until he goes to bed. “Today, oatmeal, two turkey sausage patties, a biscuit, juice, and milk.” He also reads, writes poetry, keeps up with correspondence, and plays chess with a lot of different people. He believes that someone might want his logs—one for each day of his existence, like a trail of crumbs from his entrance into EDCF to his exit. This gives him a sense of purpose.

After he had sat in prison a while, Rader talked about some of his criminal incidents. “As I reconstruct this terrible drawing [of Kathryn Bright], I’m touched by her words, ‘I can’t breath, help me.’ Like Julie Otero, her words, ‘May God have mercy on your soul.’ Both of those will haunt me forever, and rightly so; I’m humble and feel sorrow and shame today as I have for years after causing death to so many.” He knows that few believe him.

“I don’t think or dream about the victims,” he says, but he does ponder what happened to him. “In my years in prison, I fantasized once or twice that if I had been Rambo, my truck loaded with AK-47s and a lot of ammo, a flack jacket and helmet, I would have shot my way out of the police trap, or drove into their parked vehicles and let them have it. Then drove north to the sewer plant, closed the gates, and make an escape with a hidden motorcycle. I would drive northeast along the Chisholm Creek to parts unknown. Such are dreams!”

Rader had been in prison for two years when a movie, *The Number 23*, came out. He didn’t see it until it was shown on television, but he was struck by the similarities between himself and the character of Walter Sparrow (played by Jim Carrey). The plot focuses on Sparrow’s obsession with the way all things seem to be connected to the number 23 or some permutation of it. Sparrow, like Rader, is an animal control officer. He’s married and has a son. He receives a book about the number as a gift and sees similarities between himself and the main character (as Rader did between himself and Sparrow). The book’s main character is a detective named Fingerling. Sparrow has dreams about killing his wife. Fingerling kills his lover and then contemplates suicide. The book ends there, on chapter 22.

A dog leads Sparrow to a grave in a cemetery for a murder victim: a student who was killed by her lover. The actual incident is so similar to the way Fingerling killed *his* lover that Sparrow believes the student’s killer is the author of the book. Soon, Walter figures out the book’s code, spelled out in every twenty-third word on every twenty-third page. Walter eventually learns that *he* both wrote the book and killed the girl. There’s more to the story, but it ends with Numbers 32:23, from the Bible: “Be sure your sin will find you out.”

To Rader, this movie was quite profound. It confirmed his theory of threes, along with his notion that the world is a mystical place in which all things are intimately related. He has a sense that the supernatural threads through everything.

Sometimes he worried that his deceased father was aware (in the afterlife) of what he had done. He also worried about his mother, who had been as shocked as everyone else upon learning that her eldest son was BTK. Publicly, his brothers Jeff and Paul had defended her and their father as solid, God-fearing parents and good people who had never abused or

neglected their sons. They were furious with people who were certain that only child abuse could explain the development of a serial killer.

Rader was embarrassed for his mother; he also worried about who would take over her care, since he had shouldered the primary responsibility. “Mom wrote a few times. Each time, [her] writing was hard to follow; it made no sense. She did wonder if dropping me on my head as a baby had caused this. Then she was gone. She died in the Fall of 2007. The facility let me know. The chaplain met with me and said I could make a call, but to who? I had no idea. I was down and depressed for several days. I miss her.

“I often wonder what my brothers think as they look at the facility—where is Dennis in that complex? It must be hard, for we [were] very close, except #4 [Jeff]. I know #3 [Billy] broke down and cried for hours after my arrest. I would have done the same. Writing now, I get sad.”

FOCUS ON FAMILY

While Rader was in the process of writing everything down, Stephen King published a collection of four stories, *Full Dark, No Stars*, including one called “A Good Marriage.”

In that story, Darcy Anderson and her husband Bob are both aware that there’s a dangerous predator around called Beadie. Bob collects coins and travels on business. When he is away on a trip, Darcy discovers an S&M-themed magazine among Bob’s things and a box with a woman’s ID—one of Beadie’s victims. Stunned, Darcy realizes that her own husband of twenty-seven years is Beadie. During a phone call, Bob realizes what she has found and insists that they maintain the status quo. Faced with limited options, Darcy decides to act on the opportunity to kill him—so he’ll never kill anyone else.

King publicly stated that he was inspired to write “The Good Marriage” by what he imagined Paula Rader must have endured when she learned that she had lived for so many years with a serial killer. Someone sent a copy to Dennis Rader, who read it with interest.

“He [Bob] is pretty well parallel to me. I assume SK did his research, then used his imagination, and put facts into fiction. For example, I collected coins. [Bob] collected coins and dealt them. He formed a business

and used that as an excuse to travel to hunt his victims. The key is the *travel time away from home and wife*. He had an accountant mind (details) much like me. I'm detail-oriented and I like 'bean counting,' or balancing the books.

"I had a Hidey Hole much like the one in the book, but he only had one! I had a lot. I collected slick ads, and slick ad magazines, and bondage type pictures. Since I felt uncomfortable in porn shops, I drew my own, from early eighth grade until [my] arrest.

"The wife [Darcy] did home bookkeeping, and Paula did that. She was a bookkeeper for businesses in our town. Oddly, my mom was a bookkeeper and Dad was good with simple math and kept detailed logs.

"[King] pictured the character [Bob] as overweight, [but] I have never been. I always exercise and watch my food intake.

"Interesting, he use 'BD' like BTK and the daughter's name (Petra) is a Spanish name. I used it in one of my cat-and-mouse letters to the police.

"I think [Bob] used his friend as an out, telling his wife what really happen, like my Factor-X ghost. (Some people believed there were two Dennis Raders in Wichita, and again oddly, there was at one time a real Dennis Rader in Wichita beside me. He and his brother Bill—my third brother's name—had a band.)

"Upon [Bob's] death, [Darcy] used a plastic baggie. Those of us into self-S/M or self gratification use plastic bags or plastic wrap to simulate asphyxiation. Or, King took off from the plastic bags used at Otero's and Vian's place. Overall, he did a good job."

When King's story was turned into a movie, there was a lot of publicity before its 2014 release. Kerri Rader (now Rawson) went to the press in anger. She claimed that King was re-victimizing both the victims' families and her own. (The movie went straight to DVD, with little fanfare.)

In March 2015, Kerri agreed to do a full interview for the *Wichita Eagle* on the tenth anniversary of her father's arrest. Kerri tells how an FBI agent came to her home (she was married and living in Michigan at the time). Because her father had taught her to be careful about strangers, she was uncertain about letting him in. When the agent asked about the infamous BTK from Wichita, she acknowledged hearing the stories as she grew up. He told her that her father had been arrested as a suspect. Kerri was astonished. It was impossible! She knew him. She had seen him a few

weeks earlier. He had been a great dad. He'd hugged her. He'd just called her.

Kerri recalled that a close neighbor, Marine Hedge, had been one of the victims. Hedge's murder had scared her, but her father had reassured her. Then she remembered that he'd been gone during the night of Hedge's death. Supposedly, he'd been on a Scout trip with her older brother, Brian. She began to realize that there were other gaps in her father's timeline. She started to waver.

Kerri allowed the agent to swab her cheek for DNA. Later she heard that he'd confessed, and that there had been more murders than originally thought. Her father had admitted to killing *ten* people. One was killed while her mother had been pregnant with her. Her father—the man who had hiked with her, prayed with her, played with her as a child—had murdered an entire family, including a young girl. He had done it to satisfy his sexual lust.

Yet, Kerri stated, he'd been a good father. He could be short-tempered, especially when his things were tampered with, but he'd never been abusive. He'd gone to church and had taught her the importance of godliness.

Kerri had written to Rader soon after his arrest, telling him to stop thinking that things with his family would go on as before. They needed time to absorb the revelations, and the lies. She asked him not to put them all through a trial. Rader wasn't keen at first to give up the spectacle, but he finally agreed to plead guilty. This did not spare his family the embarrassment of a public recounting of everything he had done. As the judge questioned him, he provided details of each and every murder.

One night in 2006, Kerri wrote her father another letter.

Should I tell you that I grew up adoring you, that you were the sunshine of my life . . . true, even if it is coming out jaded and bitter now. But really, who could blame me? Hey, it's okay to yell at your father all you want when he's a serial killer. . . .

In the next breath I want to ask if you're staying warm at night. . . . I'm so sorry that you're alone in that small cold concrete cell and sometimes I just wish I could give you a hug.

But she did not send it. Instead she pondered the importance of forgiveness, thanks to support from members of her church.

In December 2012, Kerri again wrote to Rader, to let him know that she had good memories of him as a father and that she forgave him. "I don't

know if I will ever be able to make it for a visit but know that I love you and hope to see you in heaven some day.”

Rader sent the *Wichita Eagle* article to me, pleased that communication with his daughter was open again.

15 THE INNER MINOTAUR

My life seems to be filled with synonyms and yet the Dark Side is full of antonyms.
Compartment must be the key. I can move back and forth, wear both White Hat and Black Hat.

Dennis Rader

Rader has been writing about himself for the past decade. He has his own thoughts on who he is and why he repeatedly killed, but these ideas can shift as he learns about new theories. For example, after watching Charlie Rose's twelve-part program on the human brain, which included a segment on violence, he wrote this passage.

"I didn't catch all of them, but I'm always seeking information on why I crossed to the Dark Side. I don't fit into the normal inmate profile. I'm like a square peg trying to fit in a round hole, even a square peg with the round pegs of other Minotaurs. I believe I have dyslexia, problems with writing down letters or numbers if they are not broken down into small groups. I also see monsters in patterns in the floor and walls.

"If I think hard enough on a dark night, the neck hairs rise and my eyes focus hard, my lips quiver, as though I'm beginning to metamorphose into a monster myself. Perhaps thinking about one I spotted earlier, my mind takes over my body.

"At times, in a dreamlike mood, I can look at my face in a mirror and begin to quiver and snarl. It reminds me of a wolf or dog as they give warning to someone. To me, it [is] a sort of Jekyll and Hyde feeling or the 'crescendo.' It could it be my dark subconscious battling for control to walk the Dark Path. Here lately I have started to speak in low tones at the end of day when tired, or if things not going well, [I speak] in a foreign dialect, talking to myself, more of a mumble. One phrase I use [is] *O-She-Noto-Co-Loto*. Either the monster in the mirror or strange speech gives me a control feeling, perhaps [like] war paint and war chants. One song that seems to come into my mind, [the] theme song from the movie, *The Good, Bad and Ugly*. As my mind sing that song, the monster and strange speech goes away. I feel better and in control again."

The police report following Rader's lengthy confession indicated that he suffered from "no mental disease," but Rader himself thinks this is debatable. He is correct that the police are not experts on such matters, although they did note his "evil depravity."

During the interrogation, Rader admitted that he "had a little bit of" pedophilia in him, because some of his pictures depicted children, and because of his treatment of Josephine Otero. The idea that he might be a pedophile "bothers me greatly. I know as men age, they tend to look upon younger women. For example, the movie, *Lolita*. To me, they're a sex object, like a doll or mannequin. I hate Kiddie porn, or even adult porn. It's not my style and was not in my collection. As I sit here, the desire for sexual fantasies has diminished. Maybe it's age or maybe the prison environment." (The forensic psychologists found that he did not meet the diagnostic criteria for pedophilia.)

CHRONOLOGY OF DARKNESS

"The trigger for Otero after layoff of Cessna was the start down a real dark path. But what triggered [me to kill] Bright, Fox, Vian, and others? What causes a man to do such acts and then return home to a wife and child? It has to be like a hit man, who does a job and also has a family. I had warm feelings toward family and friends, yet very cold toward objects of my pursuit.

"Wegerle happened as my company was having management trouble. It was a stressful time, and [with] Davis I was at the end of job-hunting days, had sort of given up. [It] would be interesting to see when I was turned down by the police department [after ADT job loss]. But bottom line, even if most often during stress, I have always been on the hunt, fantasize too much, day-dreaming too much, finding ropes and bondage and those pictures of a victim sexually stimulating. The seed sowed early in life, and the gateway to the dark path! When I had no work, and Paula would get up and leave for work, I would stay in bed and think about my fantasies. I did it too much. They became too strong.

"The top six items that I think led me along the path to the Dark Side were 1) the monsters that scared me (because to overcome the fear I became one); 2) the feelings when chickens were bound for killing; 3) my feelings

around barns and silos (prisoner, trapped, tied cousin up); 4) *The House of Wax* movie (monster in control of a bound victim); 5) abusive teachers (control them with bondage and have sexual gratification); and 6) fantasies became voyeurism by age 11–12.

“I started out as the White Hat, a good guy.

“I had some trauma when my mother caught her hand in the couch, and when she made me give back the tractor. I was highly sensitive to criticism. I did not develop a close relationship with her. I also felt rejected when I lost my first girlfriend. I had a short-fused temper and acted out.

“We had nothing at first, while my schoolmates had a lot more. Couldn’t compete. I had to get part-time jobs in high school to buy nice things. But I was a slow learner, shy, and so humiliated in class. I was sometimes bullied and picked on. I developed a life in my mind for escape.

“I hated my fifth grade teacher, and I was turning lone wolf, into bondage. Sex and bondage seemed to blend. In my fantasies, she was my first real victim. Before her, I had been the teacher’s pet. After 4th grade, I lost that. My first sexual gratification happened when I tied a rope around myself and spied on a teacher. What was okay early in life and somewhat preteen grew into a Dark Monster later.

“The dark life really happened when I was 13–14. I found and read my dad’s book about Harvey Glatman. I masturbated while reading it. I got into light bondage and read a *Redbook* story about a guy strangling his girlfriend. (Some of my slick ad girls collected later looked like the women in Glatman’s photos, who were about to die.)

“I would watch people with a telescope from a tree. I read more stag books with women tied up. I got a crush on the daughter of a man I worked for, and had fantasies about tying her up. I also fantasized about tying up the popular girls at school on the railroad tracks. I love mummy movies, because of the wrapping and control. I did some animal cruelty. Some things were just objects to me. When the sexual excitement starts, the object becomes a target.

“The first murder novel I read had a girl on the cover, being strangled. I threw the book away but saved the front cover. Between 14 and 16, I started my sexual drawings of bound girls and dungeons. Old barns became an attraction, especially with silos, and I imagined my dungeons in them. Around this age, I would tie myself up in an old building by the Little

Arkansas River. At 16–17, I’d sneak around, hoping to find a girl, but I was lost as to how I would achieve this, so I would do self-bondage for release.

“By the time I dated at age 18, I was cubed. It might have been too late by then [for a normal relationship]. I grew excited over small thefts, which were become more real than [acquiring] the money.

“At my first duty station in the Air Force, I started my clip art and drawings. But I had girlfriends, and the fantasies dropped away. I stalked girls and made my first hit kit.

“While dating Paula, there was no dark side. I was in love. I worked or I was at home with family or at church. When Paula was in a car wreck, in the hospital, I started up again, from looking at magazines.

“The boring work at Coleman let me fantasize a lot. Toward the end of junior college, I made another hit kit. After college, I quit Coleman and started at Cessna. Then I lost the job and felt lost and humiliated. I broke into a house and stole things. My mind slipped into sex. I tried to kidnap a woman.

“Hunting and prowling became a habit, much like drugs. You learn to cover up, hide those times in your normal life and develop a different set of life frames. It was easy to play on the Dark Stage and then join the theater audience and say to yourself, ‘Hey I’m a pretty good actor!’ It’s much more fun to [live in] fantasy at times than [in] a real world.

“When I started at ADT, this gave me out-of-town trips. I would also prowl around cities, spotting PJs for my next time in town. I did a lot of BES and attempted hits, and motel parties.

“I could draw dungeons and machines and nudes, but they were not pornographic. It must have been from my Christian views. Could this be why I couldn’t look into the eyes of my victims? The record shows that I was a good person and a good family man. In 34 years with Paula, I never had sex with another woman. But a Dark Side lay hidden and at times would come out of hiding and become a monster.”

STANDARD ASSESSMENTS

Quite a few researchers sent Rader self-report assessments, which he often filled out and kept in his own files. Most researchers realize that self-report inventories are vulnerable to misinformation if the respondent has a

selective, resistant, or poor memory; wants to manage impressions for a personal agenda; or readily lies for fun (duping delight). Sometimes impression management is conscious manipulation and sometimes it's the respondent's typical mode (or a mix of both). Below, I summarize Rader's responses to a long questionnaire. Readers can make their own judgments about his candor.

Essentially, he believes he is a good person and he thinks others are essentially good, too. He takes no stand on whether he is "evil," although he fears the social and spiritual consequences of what he has done. He states that he values his life and the lives of others (including animals). He believes that others have loved him and he has loved others. There are people today about whom he cares deeply. He understands that he is an outcast and thinks this was "slightly" true of his status when he was a juvenile. He has had good friends throughout his life, but he admits that others have hurt him (although not significantly).

He says he is not paranoid but does think he is grandiose. He wanted power and control over others. At times, his emotional response to victims was blunted. "Can control emotion and no acting on the spur of a moment. [It was] more cold-hearted fastening on victims and thinking things through!"

Rader denies that he was physically, sexually, or emotionally abused by either parent or any caretaker.

His motive for murder, he states, was sexual. It was for thrills and attention. Still, he says, "I do not know why I killed." Initially, he states, he was eliminating witnesses. "Witness, and panic at time, like all criminals, don't want to be caught." His victims did not deserve it. He claims to feel remorse and regret.

Rader does not view himself as impulsive (despite several significant impulsive acts) and thinks he can control his temper. He says that he accepts responsibility, but readily blames factors outside his control.

Before and after committing each murder, Rader felt euphoric, guilty, and powerful. Afterward, he also felt satisfied and slightly frustrated. "For the most part, sexual fantasy was present long before the murder act. Death would be the final book on the fantasy; so I guess it was planned, yet once or twice, I panic, and the witness problem was there to deal with."

When rating the intensity at which he has felt various emotions, he listed rage, love, hate, sadness, happiness, and disgust as "very intense,"

while fear and surprise were “moderate.”

Rader considers himself to be spiritual and religious. He believes in God but does not necessarily think there is life after death. “Believe every one should have a God, peace and settlement of death. Lately I believe more in nature as the creator, someone or something had to make the world.”

His greatest fear is “loss of total love from friends or family, being completely shut out.”

The traumatic events that he cites from his childhood have been described in this book. “Accident or Test: Mom’s hand caught in sofa. Being dropped on head. Monster in bedroom.” For traumatic events in adulthood, he lists the loss of his job (twice) and a car accident. Despite his “death to pretty girls” fantasies, he does not cite any instance of a female directly or intentionally hurting him.

Rader reports that he was never in an altered state when killing and never dreams about the murders he committed. “I don’t refantasize any of the victims, and probably Josephine Otero, I wish I never did that to her. After many years only disgust and sadness on that act.”

When asked to use only one word to describe how killing others made him feel, he said, “Control over life and death.” Factor X, says Rader, was “sex that run away in a fantasy world.”

The things that could have prevented him from killing, he believes, were “keeping real busy, and perhaps, joining S/M club or more study on serial killers.” Rader thinks that criminologists who are interested in what makes someone like him tick should consider these questions: “Did they have long and complicated play or fantasy time in their minds as a child, basically a novel going on, and [they] could stop and write another chapter and add to it. Was this movie more fun and entertaining than reality or could be used to replace it?”

Asked if there is something he would like others to know about him, Rader says, “Why can I be so normal, yet slide into the dark and hurt those people and my love ones.” He hopes to benefit the families of his victims by “trying to tell the real story, so that others, like the police, may learn.”

SELFIE ANALYSIS

Although Dennis Rader has not been formally diagnosed (with standardized instruments) as a psychopath, someone on the evaluation team (perhaps Mendoza) wrote a cryptic note on the back of his competency report, hinting that psychopathy is possible in his case. Many in law enforcement have used this label to describe Rader, including the FBI profilers. Psychopathy researchers have been more cautious.

Psychopathy is considered a character disorder, and recent research strongly suggests that a disorder of the brain might be a significant factor in its development. The central characteristics are an absence of conscience, a strong tendency to lie and manipulate, a lack of empathy, and a supreme narcissism that places the needs of the individual above all others, even if it brings harm.

In response to my question about how aware he was of the way his double life might hurt others, Rader rated himself on what he viewed as the “six main traits of a psychopath”: Narcissism, deception, lack of conscience (in one side of the cube), lying, and manipulativeness were strong. Only impulsivity was, to his mind, weak. In some contexts, he was also coldhearted.

I gave Rader the Self-Report Psychopathy Scale. As expected, his desire to appear to be a good person influenced his response (“Its how I am now”), thereby invalidating the score. Nevertheless, he suspected that he might have a high score on standard psychopathy assessments, so he started reading Kevin Dutton’s *The Wisdom of Psychopaths*. Although Rader later reported that the book offered no insight and put it aside, he did make a few comments.

Dutton attempts to show why a little bit of psychopathy in our personalities might benefit us. For example, fearlessness and indifference to what others think can assist us toward our goals. But some critics believe that Dutton misunderstands or misrepresents the primary constructs of psychopathy, redefining them in more socially acceptable terms that better suit his premise. Although charm, focus, and mental toughness will benefit us all, and “functional psychopaths” are supposedly cognitively empathic, Dutton leaves out the malignant part, the thing that has labeled many criminal psychopaths as evil. In other words, Dutton’s argument gave Rader a way to accept being a psychopath (if he is one) without giving up being a “White Hat.”

“Starting to do a book outline (to help me understand me) on Dutton’s *The Wisdom of Psychopaths*. I did spot one thing I had underlined. Szabolcs Keri, a researcher from Budapest, uncovered a genetic polymorphism associated with both schizophrenia and creativity. These people have two copies of a particular single-letter DNA variation in a gene called neuregulin 1, which has been linked to psychosis—as well as poor memory and sensitivity to criticism (which I can’t handle very well). So, I’m starting on an outline of my inner workings.

“*The Wisdom of Psychopaths* reflects on some circumstances [in which] psychopaths seem to be more empathetic than normal people, or more helpful. This concept shaves wood off my square peg, for I didn’t understand [from other theories] why I could be so helpful as a husband, father, scout, church leader, compliance officer, and security expert. I helped anyone in trouble. Am I two people in one body?”

As Rader lost interest in Dutton, he picked up Adrian Raine’s *The Anatomy of Violence*, a book I sent to him (the only book of this kind I wanted to send that the prison did not block). I was curious what Rader’s responses would be to Raine’s discussion of violence and the brain. He made his way through this fairly difficult book, chapter by chapter, over the course of two years.

Raine finds that the various causal strands of crime are difficult to identify in individuals. There are both genetic and environmental influences (lots of each), and for any specific individual, no one can say which has more impact. Life is complex: differences in genes can mean differences in how individuals respond to familial, social, and other environmental factors.

As mentioned earlier, Raine was the first researcher to use modern brain scans on highly violent offenders. He got his start in neuro-developmental criminology by attaching sensors to the skin of inmates to measure their agitation when they heard a loud sound. (Some had a low startle response.) In another study, Raine discovered that children from a small island who had slower heart rates and similarly reduced skin responses to loud noise got into more trouble than other children. Raine surmised that the children’s diminished sense of fear and distress interfered with the process of learning from risky behavior. The same children also did not learn empathy, although improved nutrition and education contributed to reducing their later criminality.

Raine thought that dulled nerves could indicate a brain disorder. In 1997, using PET scans that track blood and oxygen flow in various brain regions during specific tasks, Raine compared forty-one murderers against forty-one matched controls. He found abnormalities in the majority of the violent subjects, especially deficits in the limbic system (amygdala), left angular gyrus, and areas of the prefrontal cortex (involved in decision making). Raine realized that such people would be impulsive, fearless, unconcerned about aversive consequences, and less able to make socially correct decisions about aggression.

A neurological condition might predispose violent predators toward a more aggressive temperament. Regardless of their ability to inhibit violent impulses, they might simply be disinclined to do so, as their sense of danger is diminished. They also have a weakened ability to associate their actions with the pain and suffering of others (unless they're sadists and *want* to inflict pain).

"I have been told I have a low heart rate," Rader says. "The warrior gene that Raine talks about—I really never feared anybody. I stood up for my rights and I learned self-defense early in life and always had a sixth sense about threatening type people. This could be why I enjoyed security work. I guess a notch below a policeman. I seem to have a high warrior gene; I played cowboys in [my] early year, fought bullies, enjoyed superheroes. I loved John Wayne movies and war movies.

"Bottom line, the S/M was stamped on me early in life and it grew and aged as I aged into a powerful fire storm, fantasy and daydreams, drawings, slick ads, true detective magazines, bondage infatuations.

"I also have a dent along the top of my head. I can feel the dent. It runs fairly straight next to my hairline or ridge. The deep index, or apex is there very prominent. Probably about four to five inches long. I wonder if this is a brain defect." He also wondered about his mother dropping him as a baby, and the fact that when pregnant with him, she had smoked—and fallen off a horse as well.

"I about wore out my pencil's on Raine's 'Broken Brains,' a most enlightening chapter. For example, he says, 'the seeds of sin are sown very early in life.' The temporary employment of psychopaths and individuals with antisocial personality disorder: I think I would or could have fit in anywhere or work on any situation, much like a chameleon."

Another intriguing development has shown up in several studies that focus on the relationship between the brain's neurotransmitter system (especially dopamine, mentioned earlier) and addiction (the inability to manage a desire for a specific behavior). The brains of psychopaths might actually be wired to keep seeking a reward, no matter what the potential cost. That is, they might be aware of consequences, but the reward outweighs them. These people might have a hyper-reactive dopamine reward system, or an abundance of dopamine.

"I wonder if I fall under the hyper-reactive-dopamine [thesis]," says Rader. "I never took drugs, [was just] a social drinker, controlled my gambling, for the most part placed family above everything else except my dangerous addiction. Throughout my life, I [have] had addictions. They run their course and wane. Once when the newly opened Greyhound Park, north of Park City, opened up, dog racing became a high point in my life. I spent a lot of time reading race books, data, daily tip sheets, making my own charts on this and that dog. I saved every spare dollar for the races, beyond what we needed for the family. Paula kept household money or budget plan, much like when I was a kid and got my allowance. So, I had to figure out a way to obtain money for the dogs. This is the key: I was between jobs. I had spare time.

"Here [in prison], I read books that I consider the cookie jar. *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* and its sequels I call my cookie jar books. They are grandma's hot chocolate chip cookie in the jar [not allowed to have]. 'Now, Johnny, don't eat any.' I probably shouldn't read these books, and some have a lot of sex and S/M, but [I think that] reading one occasionally is all right.

"In Raine's book, I was very interested in the reward-seeking behavior. All of us have it, but true psychopaths can't say no to it, like a drug pushes them on to depravity and vice. What really caught my attention was [the] reward for money or desires. This must be the same thing that gamblers have. [They] can't say no, or turn away, or sell their farm to get money to make more money. Could my striatal be bigger?" (The striatum is a part of the brain involved with the reward system.)

However, there were items in Raine's book with which Rader could not identify.

"Raine mentions that coldblooded killers 'never break a sweat,' but I can tell you from experience, I sweated a lot. In fact, I was worried the

police would find sweat droppings and do DNA from them, but it was usually heavy sweat during the kill, or [from the exertion of] breaking in. Under stress I sweat badly, yet my mind seem sharpened and nothing [is] out of focus. I can tell you [that] each time the nervous state got better, and I had more control. So his concept of ‘breaking sweat’ may mean they are cool under stress in thinking. And I was.

“Raine mentioned that most [violent] criminals have been abused in childhood or neglected. I was not abused in any way or form. I was usually a teacher’s pet at school. But I wonder if I felt neglected. There were times that Mom didn’t show up at school to help with parties and Dad [was] away at work or busy with two jobs. I don’t fit the normal mold of a serial killer. Most have either abusive fathers or mothers, or something in childhood that was not normal. Both of my parents loved me and never abused me.

“Now I need to figure out my childhood days if my folks had anything to do with my start or sowing of bad seeds, or the way I was brought up. That leads to the idea that genes that predispose one to violence must interact in a specific social context to be activated. Since I was already using bondage gear and thinking along those lines, seeing the Glatman victims bound triggered the ‘opus’ of bondage, and forever froze [these images of terrified women] in my mind. Somehow all my victims fell into this frozen frame. I also took pictures much like Glatman, and I had an early hobby of rope knotting, collecting string, and making my ‘strangler knot.’”

ROOM TO FEEL

“I was touched by the Tucson shooting [of Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords]. Why is it that I can have normal person emotions, touched, be sad, have tears, yet do what I did? I believe this is why so many people that were close to me don’t understand. I certainly don’t. Society should have a way for people like me to call for help, without questions.

“Hopefully when this book comes out, the key will be there, to help others who study the criminal mind to better understand a Dark Mind.”

EPILOGUE THE TIPPING POINT

Such madness, jumping from cube to cube.
Dennis Rader

Throughout this process, I played several games of chess with Rader. We sent our moves back and forth through the mail. He warned me at times that he had an eye on one of my pieces. He expected to win. He likes control. I was ever aware that he had viewed his victims as pawns in a game. They were “objects” for release, and “release has to be achieved.”

But win or lose, I get the final word.

LIFE PATH, DEATH PATH

I think Rader’s obsessions with bondage, sex, and death began as a reaction. The memories that he recalls so vividly suggest salient childhood issues, especially with females who held power over him. “I recall dominant females in life,” Rader says, “and seem to work them into PJs or fantasies.” (He told the police that his three older victims resembled his grandmother, but to me he said that he was unsure what he meant by this.) He insists there was no abuse, but he resented his mother’s power to humiliate him. During his interrogation, while discussing being disciplined as a child, he admitted, “I never really did like my mother, although I would never tell her that.” Psychologically unable to strike out at her, he found solace in mental stand-ins who he could capture, disempower, punish, and eliminate. These stand-ins might symbolize a caretaker he needed but did not fully trust, someone who made him feel off-balance.

He knew it was wrong to think about kidnapping and murder, but the more he looked at true detective magazines, the more he wanted to replicate that fantasy. Information about killers and killing was readily available, and it was easy for him to normalize it. Pretty girls that attracted him—but also made him feel awkward and powerless—became targets for fantasy control.

His narcissism suggests a fixation in adolescence, which could be from a developmental disability. When sexual release was attained via fantasy images of bondage, torture, and death, the pursuit of these images became his addiction. Whether Rader's addiction is linked to a neurological predisposition over which he had weak control is unknown. He has had some head injuries but no brain scans with notable results. His manner of expression suggests a processing disorder.

Debra Niehoff and Mireielle Meyerhofer, two neuroscientists who have read some pages of Rader's letters, agree with Mendoza's analysis that Rader appears to have hypergraphia, which would point to possible developmental issues and learning disabilities. But there is no formal diagnosis, because there has been no focused testing.

I noted Rader's consistent inability to appreciate the enormity of his crimes, or of the effects his actions had on the victims, their families, and the community. His apparent pride in his accomplishments undermines his expressions of remorse. He seems to believe that he controls his world with words. Whatever he says or writes is what he believes others will accept. He engages in impression management, like Ted Bundy, becoming whatever he thinks will work best with his audience. My advantage was having access to his self-presentation in several different contexts. It was clear that he was heavily invested in verbal expression, yet he missed the behavioral component that revealed much more.

Rader insists that he is a good person who did some bad things. This reminds me of an episode of *Breaking Bad*, one of the television series we discussed. The show is about a chemistry professor, Walter White, who develops from an apparently solid family man into a ruthless meth dealer and murderer. Walter convinces himself that his criminal acts are justified by righteous motives, and Rader identified with him. In an episode called "The Fly," Walter goes over and over his recent calculations, yet they will not add up. Unable to spot the error, he becomes obsessed with a fly buzzing around the lab. In his mind, the fly is an unacceptable contamination. This pollutant, tiny as it might be, could eventually ruin his entire set-up. The fly symbolizes something dark inside him, something that will thwart his determination to affirm his acts as good. Should anyone get wind of this corruption, he fears that they will harshly judge him. They won't "miss him when he's dead."

Walter cannot escape the fly. Neither can Rader. Impression management can only go so far.

As we neared completion of this work, Rader told me about a dream he had, in a series of “weird dreams and thoughts” with a similar theme. “I hope I haven’t opened a wound!”

The dream featured a television character who reminded him of one of his victims. In the show, this character rescued her friends from a boxcar. “It was about a boxcar. One end had an old-fashioned barbershop, like my Grandpa Cook had. It smelled of beer and smoke. I didn’t like the smoke, so I walked to the other end. Outside the door, the owner [was] holding a new ‘thin screen and sign,’ with a Smart phone. You can change it with the push of a button. On it is a picture of me, the one in my recent poem to you, and something about more than the ten cases being investigated. This shop is modern. It has a computer, table to work at, coffee shop, snacks, etc., all while you wait your turn or hang around. In my dream, I’m working on a letter to you, so it is spread out on the table. I get my call # for a haircut and realize there is too much stuff left out for eyes to see. So, I walk back to put it into my black briefcase, like the one I owned at home on arrest day. Then the alarm clock goes off in my dream. I’m trying to shut it off, and at the same time, two police officers come in. One taps me on the shoulder and says, ‘We know you did more than 10.’ I explained I’m writing this to Dr. to explain my theory, but the alarm continues. Then I awake to find out the real alarm clock is buzzing away. I must have been in deep subconscious state. This dream had the boxcar, Grandpa Cook’s pool hall, cops, computers, BTK, my old briefcase in which I put slick ads, and my feelings about smoke in a room. Nice thing about dreams—the cops disappear!”

Readers can make what they will of this dream.

About the question of whether Rader killed more people than he admits, let me say this. There was no evidence in his journals of other murders. Since he wanted to be an elite serial killer, why hold back information? Some people believe that he will not discuss any that came after 1994, a period when the death penalty was in place. I thought this, too. During his interrogation, however, he expressed surprise that the death penalty would not apply to him. So this issue apparently was not a factor. He admits that he did not stop “trolling” in the long intervals between murders, and actually did try for a “hit” in 2004 (Boardwater)—which would have put him in jeopardy of execution.

Might there be unsolved cases in other states or countries? Perhaps Rader does not want to be moved from Kansas, or sent to a state with a death penalty that would apply to him. Might he have another hidey hole where he kept journals? He has indicated that some of his hiding places were never located. During his interrogation, he told officers that if they come across a case in which they suspect him, they should just “ask a question” and he will answer. There is some research to suggest that serial killers talk only about those murders that please them. Perhaps he did a sloppy job somewhere? Rader admits to quite a few failed attempts, however, and a lot of errors. Still, we know he carried a hit kit while in the Air Force, and we also know that he often destroyed his photos and pictures.

I think the dream described above suggests, at the very least, that Rader has hidden things that he believes would interest law enforcement, and that an inner alarm, perhaps related to family loyalty, prevents him from revealing them. Or maybe he simply wishes to prevent officials from seeing what he has written to me until it’s finally in print. The letter on the table appears to symbolize things he has said to me in the process of working on this book, and perhaps he fears that revelations are now out in the open (on the table) that he wants to keep hidden. His grandfather had been a barber and, in the dream, it is Rader’s turn to get a haircut, so that might be about preparing for this presentation. The character in the boxcar episode was a powerful woman—the kind of heroic, confident female figure he feared. In the dream, he was inside the boxcar; she was outside. She appears to be the figure in charge. (At one time, he created a narrative for BTK that blamed the mother for how he turned out.) All these items seem to be part of this dream.

SEXUAL DISORDERS AND HOMICIDAL ACTS

Although this book is not intended as a criminological text, I note some things for psychologists, criminologists, and law enforcement personnel that I think are relevant to understanding Rader and could be beneficial to this field of study. In fact, I think that Rader’s notion of “cubing,” in which a person can have many sides with none being visible to the others,

provides a more accurate analogy than compartments for a discontinuous experience (not to mention being easier to say than “compartmentalizing”).

Many people believe that abuse is a necessary condition for the development of a serial killer. In cases in which no abuse or neglect is evident, they argue that we just did not discover it: the killer is lying, or covering up family secrets. This approach traps the phenomenon in a static stereotype. To learn more, we must allow the structure of human experience to remain open-ended, so we can add possible outliers. As research continues, we might discover that these are *not* outliers but are central to an evolving understanding.

While their acts are shocking and extreme, serial killers are human. Working from within the human experience, we can track their psychological trajectories toward murder.

Here I list some human characteristics:

- overestimating our willpower
- idealizing ourselves
- daydreaming about power
- indulging in secret behaviors that keep attracting us
- deceiving others and keeping secrets
- experimenting and exploring
- attempting to control addiction without help
- presenting different faces for different situations

Most people can relate to this list on some level. Whether we like the idea or not, we overlap in some ways with people like Dennis Rader, Ted Bundy, and John Wayne Gacy. If we want to understand serial killers—and perhaps develop programs for treatment and prevention—we should not categorize them as monsters who are too different from us to comprehend. They are more extreme. They are more deviant. But they start as human beings. Somehow, they take the experiences they have in common with us all in a different direction. How does this happen?

Although we are making progress in the understanding of psychosexual disorders, the area of paraphilias has few resources. In August 2015, psychiatrist Fred Berlin, director of the Sexual Behavior Consultation Unit at the Johns Hopkins Hospital, told the *Washington Post*, “Right now, our society is more equipped to look at it [paraphilias] as a moral problem

than a medical or scientific problem. But there is a biological basis for these cravings.”

A study published in 2013, undertaken by Michael Woodworth and his colleagues, looked at high-risk sexual offenders in terms of fantasy and paraphilias. Those scoring high on the Psychopathy Checklist were more likely to be sadistic in their preferences. Callousness was an important trait, and stressors a significant factor in moving from fantasy to action. This group also was more likely to repeat their offenses and to be more violent. They sought to confirm their sexual power through fantasy, and their fantasies had a significant impact on the offending process. Homicidal offenders (especially organized, predatory offenders) had a greater incidence of paraphilias than non-homicidal offenders. The fantasies served to help plan the acts.

We can see all of this in Rader. Low self-esteem, loneliness, and humiliation seem to be significant contributing factors to his behavior. In 1994, Dr. Robert Hale published an article about the role of humiliation in serial murder. Victims are symbolic, Hale found, triggering embarrassing internalized memories about being taunted, threatened, or abused that continue to enrage the killer. He strikes out in an attempt to lessen the emotional impact but, since the victim is not the offending person, there is no resolution. The murders continue. The killer does not make the association between his past and what he’s currently doing. He is just trying to feel better.

Serial killers, says Hale, seem to have failed to progress through the normal human stages of development, in which one learns to distinguish between those things one can control and those things one cannot control. They remain frustrated. Some develop an exaggerated sense of what they *must* control and feel ashamed when they cannot satisfy those expectations. When someone like Rader uses standards of mastery as the basis of self-esteem, he sets himself up for a continual sense of inadequacy. This is immature, and he can become fixated. He might mature in other areas—get a job and support a family, for example—but not in the social-sexual area.

While Hale’s ideas are appealing, I would say that the victim does not necessarily have to remind the killer of a humiliating episode from his (or her) past. A murder also could be a response to current frustrations, such as a job loss, domestic conflict, or other humiliating situation, under which the killer wants to regain his or her sense of power. In other words, any

disempowering or disruptive situation (as perceived by the killer) can trigger murder, and if the end result feels better, mechanisms are in place, psychologically and biologically, to encourage repetition of the act. The most forceful aspect of this equation is the killer's perception; *he* decides the impact and intensity of the humiliation or loss of esteem, just as he decides what will make him feel better. The perceived "wrong" becomes justification for acting out against his targets.

Peter Vronsky, whose *Serial Killers: The Method and Madness of Monsters* was in Rader's mother lode, shared his opinion on this subject with me. "It is not necessarily abuse that lurks in serial killer childhood histories, but trauma. The trauma could be abuse but it can also be many other things. And it might not necessarily be objectively traumatic. A kitten leaping on a child's chest could be a form of trauma if that is how the child reacts to it. So we see these cases of serial killers, and nothing seems to have seriously happened that *we* would associate with trauma, but in their own secretly disordered life it could be traumatic for them. Loneliness I think is the key factor in serial killer childhood development. In that loneliness, combined with the reasons the child is rejected by peers, fantasies of violence, revenge and control develop and all they need now is a fusion of those fantasies with sexual ones. Humiliation would certainly contribute to loneliness."

Rader said he was lonely. He said he was humiliated. He reacted strongly—even dangerously—to being rejected. He hates criticism and making mistakes. To eliminate such trauma, Rader sought control over his life. Total control meant death to those who symbolized the source of disequilibrium. Because he found comfort and sexual excitement in self-bondage, he bound the victims as well. To him, strings and ropes meant tying up loose ends, as well as making someone helpless. Because he fed his psyche constantly with images and narratives of predators and bondage, this formed the content of his criminal world. The images of bound and terrified women from Harvey Glatman's photos provided the most intense arousal. Sealed into his mind from the age of fourteen, such images became his ultimate paraphilia, his addiction. The things he had feared as a child had made him feel helpless but stimulated. The stimulation became enticing and then addicting, especially as he used his own fears to victimize others.

Excitement over this feeling of power, coupled with his innate ability to fantasize in rich detail, would help him relive and repeat these

experiences. They replaced mundane reality. Only transient moments of high emotion (such as falling in love) and keeping busy with concrete tasks could displace the addiction—and these only temporarily. Identification with movie monsters added a powerful layer. Once afraid of monsters, *he* now becomes the monster. It does not appear that Rader was seeking a way to punish his fantasy victims for his inadequacies, but to possess and thereby control them.

For Rader, this process is more vivid than the average person's daydreaming. The characters he created with his "slick ads" were quite real to him. So were the monsters, which have shadowed him since childhood. When excitement over his fantasy victims leveled off, he sought actual victims for a greater high. These real people became objects for his mental game. He described Project Spider, for example, as a home invasion in Park City for his own entertainment. "I was just bored," he told police.

Rader's sense of self remains that of an adolescent, expanding narrowly, with himself and his desires central. It is a narcissistic cocoon, buffering him from thinking about the effects of his acts on others. Like many adolescent males, he forged ahead with little regard for moral decision-making, believing in his own invincibility. Rader became fully absorbed in his fantasy world, tuning out anything unpleasant (to him) and blind to the distance he created from those he says he loves. Despite getting married, having a family, and keeping various jobs, his psychological maturity remained fixated in an adolescent's fantasy life.

Because he could so easily dissociate himself from others, he could (and still can) switch fluidly into and out of parallel realities. Into his favored world, he brought those things that he had eroticized: silky undergarments, ropes, helpless girls, and spy paraphernalia.

Yet he *could* have kept this all in a fantasy life. Many men do. What drew him over the edge? Perhaps it was the pull to become known, famous—a somebody in the way that other serial killers were. "You've been studying these guys for years," he says. "You get a high!" Eventually, the publicity itself became an addiction and, subsequently, his downfall. He did not really care if he continued to kill. In fact, he was planning to "retire." But he *did* care that he was being forgotten.

In sum, here is Rader's self-perception. He *must* have sexual release; bondage provides it. He *must* be known and important; serial murder was his chosen course.

Considering this evidence, “Factor X” is no mystery. It is the addiction to both violent bondage fantasies and a need for attention. Once Rader had walked the “death path,” it was not only easier to repeat it, but also necessary—if he hoped to become an elite offender like his cherished role models. Narcissism greased the tracks.

Dealing with addiction is not easy. The addict constantly wants more and the addiction takes over his life. It is a craving that changes the brain. Stress can trigger the need, as can other cues (detective magazines, serial killer tales). Shame does not counter the pleasure of satisfying that craving. Nothing else in the addict’s life even comes close. Although addiction to a drug is not the same as addiction to murder, addiction under any circumstances has the same intense grip. It is persistently present.

The bound chickens and the struggling cats, the enticing starlets that he mentally captured, the self-bondage in which he acted out a victim’s role, the image of his powerful mother helpless, the feeling of excitement that accompanied ropes and plastic bags—all of these merged in Rader’s sexual development. He believed he could control its momentum, but he could not. Whether his weakness is a neurological disorder or not remains unclear and offers a provocative area to study. Nevertheless, Rader knew that certain magazines and images provided key propellants, and the tipping point came closer each time he practiced. With every success, his excitement increased. With every failure, he became determined to do better next time. Once he believed he had garnered a “fan club,” the need to be larger-than-life “for them” was too compelling to resist.

Considering the way dopamine operates during novelty and excitement, we can imagine how Rader became “infected” by his obsession with killers like Glatman, Bundy, and Holmes. On initial exposure, the ideas and images excited him. So did their clandestine quality. They invited him to look again, and then to absorb them into his own fantasies. His brain gradually shifted toward what felt good to him but, since he also considered his fantasies to be shameful, he “cubed” to keep his “normal” world separate from his “abnormal” world.

This does not excuse Rader, legally or morally. He knew that what he was doing was wrong and he made an incremental series of decisions that could have gone in other directions. Choice was always possible. Even if he had less control over himself than a normal person, he still had the ability to avoid the “cookie jar.” He knew that keeping busy and relying on fantasy

outlets kept his hands from killing. Yet he wanted the challenge, and he thought he deserved to do what he wanted. By making the legendary serial killers into his role models, he ensured that he would learn from them and keep trying to become one.

LAW ENFORCEMENT

Rader managed to exploit two key human transactions: trust and heuristics (mental shortcuts, such as stereotypes). This frustrated an otherwise solid investigation.

Some of the stereotypes about murderers—and specifically serial killers—derive from spotty research with unrepresentative samples. This has influenced both police work and media reporting. Among these stereotypes are the notions that serial killers have been abused, that they are smart but uneducated, and that they're loners who generally take transient jobs. The general impression is that "serial killer" is a homogenous personality type. Although simple formulas might be practical, we need to appreciate that we are dealing with a diverse range of individuals.

During the 1970s and 1980s, such characterizations helped the public to get a handle on a frightening and dangerous phenomenon. Rather than remaining fluid and open-ended, however, our notions about serial killers became entrenched. Thus, when Rader was nearly caught at a rest stop (during the weekend he killed Dolores Davis), he was able to save himself by emphasizing his work with the Boy Scouts. The officer who failed to thoroughly check him that night was operating on the belief that such citizens are not criminals. (Although most are not, Rader is not the only serial killer to have been a Boy Scout volunteer.)

This officer used a mental shortcut. It is a normal human response, but officers can be better trained to develop a more mindful approach. Investigator Kim Rosmo, creator of a geographic profiling software, offers some tips. He points out that clear and rational thinking is not automatic, because our brains are wired to quickly reduce uncertainty. This creates the conditions for tunnel vision, which blinds us to the range of possibilities. Instead, we see only what we expect to see. Certain cognitive biases present a persistent challenge in law enforcement. It is important to minimize their

influence. Although mental shortcuts reduce complexity, they can also introduce error.

Here are some suggested strategies for minimizing the potential negative impacts of cognitive bias on investigative tasks.

1. Teach investigators about how key cognitive processes affect their work.
2. Teach investigators how to form and analyze competing hypotheses, to become mentally flexible.
3. Create a case-specific checklist of key assumptions that encourage stereotypes.
4. Spell out areas of uncertainty or ambiguity as attractants for shortcuts.
5. Examine the impact of ego investment and fatigue on a case.
6. Study good investigations to learn the benefits of observational alertness.

On the issue of trust, potential remedies are harder to identify. Tightening up security over public use of copy machines and computers could help, as could installing closed-circuit cameras in public spaces. However, predators typically have the advantage. They are vigilant for weak spots and loopholes.

But the better option might be for investigators to become more alert to people with secretive behavior. Serial killers can and do have families. They can be popular in the community. They can be successful. They can have college degrees and steady jobs. They can look like us. It is time to replace simplistic stereotypes with the more complex portraits that a full application of psychology and criminology can offer.

Rader suggests an intriguing notion: have some way for people like him to discuss their problems without the consequence of imprisonment. There are voluntary programs in Europe for those who suffer from paraphilias, including coercive or criminal paraphilias. Years ago, Dr. Alexandre Bukhanovsky, a sexual disorders expert in the Ukraine, ran a controversial program that allowed those with homicidal fantasies, including killers, to come to him for counseling. *Newsweek* published a story about him in 1999. Bukhanovsky said that his study would help science to locate the roots of aggression, and the FBI invited him to join an international serial killer symposium in 2005. One child rapist who was caught said that Bukhanovsky had a way of getting people to tell him things they would ordinarily keep secret.

This is a dicey subject precisely because the crimes are outrageous. We want to separate serial killers like Rader from decent people, to call them monsters—especially if their crimes have a deviant sexual component. We want them to take full responsibility for their crimes and even to denounce

themselves (although when they do, we tend to think they are not really remorseful).

Our moral repugnance is understandable. However, it can hinder us from trying to comprehend and prevent. We need to expand our knowledge of serial murder, based on the details of actual cases, and recognize that some might surprise us with new twists. This study of Dennis Rader might offer layers of information that standardized assessments cannot provide. My interpretation of the data is not the only possible one. I hope others will dig out things that I missed.

END GAME

Rader had hoped for a total of twelve murders before he “retired,” and was drawing up plans for his fantasy silo when he was arrested. He realized that he was not as agile as he had been as a younger man; he was making mistakes. He intensely disliked errors, so he took longer to stalk and plan. The physical game evolved into a mental game. He picked out targets, yet found reasons why he could not complete his “projects.” Still, he considered doing some part-time security or truck-driving work that would give him opportunities to be away from home. “Maybe have time to troll and prowl, and [have] mini-motel parties. Set my own hours, no one to answer to.” At least in his imagination, he was still BTK.

Occasionally, he pondered what would happen if he got caught. He thought he might kill a cop, or commit suicide. But narcissists are self-protective. As Rader says, “It’s best to tell the story. Maybe you guys can learn something and maybe you can help.”

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